
Geography, biography and history

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Last reviewed in these columns a few years ago (RR 2015/312), the *Churchill Archive* is worth looking at again, as it has added new content. Churchill's life and leadership impacted twentieth-century world history significantly and his voluminous output cannot help but increase understanding of any number of historical threads. The *Archive* can be searched by any number of facets or browsed in the catalogue by categories such as personal, constituency and official. Most will choose to use the easy search box or the advanced search (keyword or string searching, year limiters). From there, it is easy to choose from places, people and time periods, each category easily exploding with a plus sign to a number of specific ranges to choose between. One example, searching for nuclear, one chooses between places (Europe or any individual country); a period (range or individual year) and eventually choose, for example, an address addressing the fears aroused by the hydrogen bomb, delivered to a mass meeting of Conservative Women in 1954. It is somehow intimate to view his typed remarks with lines scratched out and additions penciled in. When encountering a name, users have the option of linking to a short biographical sketch via *Who's Who* or *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

Featured items each month highlight one item. In February, it was a *Nash's Pall Mall Magazine* essay Churchill wrote in 1924 dramatically entitled "Shall We All Commit Suicide?" He was prophetically warning about technological advances that could allow for the extermination of mankind.

Material recently added includes guides for the Cold War, the Islamic World, Empire and

Imperialism, Churchill and the Conservative Party, Appeasement, the General Strike and Science and Technology. The Science and Technology section is introduced by Cambridge Professor Graham Farmelo, a physicist. His selections point the reader to correspondence between Churchill and Oxford Professor and Physicist Frederick Lindemann, President Roosevelt and a top-secret letter to Prime Minister Attlee concerning atomic and other weaponry. At the end are pointers to related distillations, such as Churchill and Air Power, with an essay by Richard Overy, Professor of History at the University of Exeter, fully cited with resources both in and outside the *Churchill Archive*, and a column that allows the reader to easily link to speeches, minutes to and from Churchill that trace the thinking about aviation to support war efforts.

The focus that is particularly valuable for teachers hard-pressed for time is the teaching materials. While intended for younger students, college instructors can certainly benefit from the teaching materials as well. Looking at the instructional materials about imperialism, the debate question is: "Was Britain divided about Indian independence, 1930-1947?" The teacher can download the eight specially chosen resources for the students to study. Students have a chart to fill out where they indicate for each source, whether the source reveals that Britain was at face value divided (or not) about Indian independence, and reasons why the source provides strong or weak evidence about this particular issue (e.g. date of source, typicality, whether the source is well informed or just an opinion). So, it makes it very easy for the teacher to send students to the preselected sources with a ready-made assignment. The full database is free of charge to secondary schools and sixth form colleges worldwide until 31 December 2020. Morgan and Rasinski (2012 p. 585) wrote that "Primary sources allow a student to get as close to a moment in time as possible, to have more of the firsthand, lived-through experience that is so crucial for deep understanding". For me, primary resources provide an intimacy with the actors in history that is invaluable for all students, young and old.

Librarians serving history programmes should definitely consider subscribing to this invaluable resource.

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Reference

Morgan, D.N. and Rasinski, T.V. (2012), "The power and potential of primary sources", *Reading Teacher*, Vol. 65 No. 8, pp. 584-594.

