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NORTH AMERICAN IMMIGRANT LETTERS, DIARIES, AND ORAL HISTORIES



North American Immigrant Letters, Diaries, and Oral Histories

“Best Reference Database 2003” Winner! –*Library Journal*

“Highly recommended for all academic and research libraries.” –*Reference Reviews*

North American Immigrant Letters, Diaries, and Oral Histories is an online text collection that provides a unique and personal view of what it meant to immigrate to America and Canada. With more than 100,000 pages of letters, diaries, pamphlets, autobiographies, oral histories, and other narratives, the collection is a rich resource for scholars in a wide range of disciplines.

Content

More than a third of the content consists of previously unpublished materials—including more than 35,000 pages of Ellis Island Oral History interviews, indexed and searchable for the first time. Approximately 2,000 political cartoons from *Puck*, *Judge's*, and *Harper's Weekly* are included.

The materials begin around 1840 and extend to the present, focusing heavily on the period from 1890 to 1920. People from many countries are represented, including more recent waves of immigrants from Latin America and Asia. Among the unique content is a diary in Yiddish, in an English translation commissioned by Alexander Street, written by a young boy newly arrived in Philadelphia, which chronicles his coming of age and describes urban life in the Roaring Twenties.

How Will You Use It?

With the help of Alexander Street's semantic indexing, researchers can easily compare experiences across temporal and ethnic boundaries. This broad, detailed, and immediate record of the experience of immigration will support research in history, sociology, ethnic and diversity studies, women's studies, labor studies, and literature. Labor historians will find descriptions of work in restaurants, meat packing plants, mines, railroads, and factories. Sociologists will discover lengthy passages describing immigrant schooling, social life, domestic life, and community rituals. Students of literature will read about the events that inspired Upton Sinclair and Theodore Dreiser.

North American Immigrant Letters, Diaries, and Oral Histories provides perspectives both on North America and on the immigrants' countries of origin. There are vivid descriptions of life under the Czar and the various revolutionary governments in Russia; tales of famine and poverty in Ireland; accounts of anti-Jewish pogroms in Eastern Europe; detailed descriptions of life in rural towns and in major cities such as London, Berlin, and Moscow; and stories of first encounters with soda pop, chewing gum, and bananas.

Alexander Street's Semantic Indexing

Unique methods of indexing provide a host of new ways to find, view, and analyze the material. As far as possible, information noted about each author includes country of origin, family occupation in the native country, the reason for immigrating, date of immigration, whether the author repatriated or stayed in North America, the state and city of settlement, occupation in the new country, political affiliation, labor or occupational affiliation, and much more.

Additional subject headings make it possible to identify material dealing with family life, courtship and gender issues, experiences of discrimination, political persecution, and hundreds of other thesaurus terms newly created for this project. Answers to queries such as these are now possible:

- Give me all letters and diaries written by a particular person within a year after his immigration.
- Show me all materials written by farmers from Eastern Europe who immigrated before 1920.
- Find mention of all political meetings attended by immigrants affiliated with the Communist Party.
- Find all occurrences of the word “discrimination” in writings by Irish laborers.
- Show me all descriptions of weddings written by Jewish immigrants, by Asians, by Cubans.

Publication Details

North American Immigrant Letters, Diaries, and Oral Histories is available on the Web through one-time purchase of perpetual rights or through annual subscription. It is complete at 100,000 pages of text, with selected associated images and audio files. For more information, contact sales@alexanderstreet.com.



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