



ADVISOR REVIEWS—STANDARD REVIEW

Poverty, Philanthropy and Social Conditions in Victorian Britain

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Composite Score: ★★ 1/3

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Abstract

Poverty, Philanthropy and Social Conditions in Victorian Britain published by Adam Matthew Digital is comprised of primary digital materials culled from three major archives in Britain and the UK focused on the experience of poverty in Victorian Britain and efforts involving economic, government, and social reform such as the Poor Law, workhouses, settlement houses, and philanthropic initiatives. Content is derived from the National Archives at Kew, British Library, and Senate House Library and includes pamphlets, correspondence, newspaper clippings, books, and other resources. A small portion of the collection utilizes Adam Matthew Digital's Handwritten Text Recognition (HTR) to enable keyword searching of handwritten documents. The digitized images and documents are clear, searchable, and user-friendly to access, save, and share. Contract provisions are standard to the product with authenticated access across institutional locations and guidelines for Interlibrary Loan sharing. Pricing is determined by institutional size and enrollment. While the product is a one-time purchase, annual hosting fees apply for ongoing access. Content is currently heavily derived from one archive, the Senate House Library, with pamphlets from this source making up nearly half of the total holdings. Users seeking access to a more extensive collection of similar material may prefer subscribing to JSTOR which includes JSTOR 19th Century British Pamphlets with over 26,000 pamphlets along with secondary scholarly journals and eBooks on the Victorian era. While not providing the primary sources of Poverty, Philanthropy and Social Conditions in Victorian Britain or JSTOR, Historical Abstracts may be an alternative resource in providing access to notable scholarly resources on the period.

Pricing Options

Poverty, Philanthropy and Social Conditions in Victorian Britain is a one-time purchase with an annual hosting fee. A representative of Adam Matthew Digital stated pricing "is determined by a range of factors that influence the size of potential user group, including but not limited to Carnegie Classification and full-time enrollment." Institutions are encouraged to contact Adam Matthew Digital directly for a quote.¹

Product Overview/Description

Poverty, Philanthropy and Social Conditions in Victorian Britain brings together primary digital materials culled from three major archives in Britain and the UK exploring "the interactions between government policy and public philanthropy in Victorian and early twentieth-century society." The historical focus of the collection spans from the New Poor Law of 1834 which ushered in the workhouse

system in Britain to the ultimate discontinuation of this system in 1930. Published in March 2020 by Adam Matthew Digital, a subsidiary of SAGE Group, the collection covers the period of 1800 to 1900 with supporting items ranging from 1678 to 1937. The product is cross-searchable with other Adam Matthew Digital subscriptions using the AMExplorer federated search platform. Scholars and educators of the historical, sociological, and political aspects of poverty in Britain at the upper undergraduate or graduate level will find much in this product to incorporate into their research including information on the Poor Laws, workhouses, settlement houses, education, welfare reform, government policy, medicine, and philanthropic efforts.

Content is derived from the National Archives at Kew, British Library, and Senate House Library and organized into 10 overarching themes. The National Archives at Kew contribute materials related to the Poor Laws and workhouses through correspondence of the Poor Law Commission and Inspectors from 1834-1904. Items from the British Library are composed of periodicals and annual reports of various settlement houses which aimed at reformation by integrating the wealthy and poor of society together into communities. Finally, the Senate House Library imparts resources from its Family Welfare Association Library with an emphasis upon societal reform in the period. The Nature and Scope section notes that in the interest of maintaining historical authenticity "terminology that may be deemed discriminatory or offensive by present-day principles may have been preserved for the historic accuracy and relevance to that particular document." The selection criteria for the collection indicates materials were excluded if they fell "outside the defined remit" of the product or were open-access content.

Users have access to digital archives in a variety of formats including correspondence, articles from contemporary periodicals, newspaper clippings, reports, registers, books, and pamphlets. The contents can be downloaded as an XLS from the product's home page with 3,385 items currently in the collection. An analysis of the holdings reveals that the vast majority, 94% of items, are from the Senate House Library and that nearly half (48%) of the items comprising the collection are pamphlets from this archive. Adam Matthew Digital offers Handwritten Text Recognition (HTR) which is a type of artificial intelligence that enables full-text searching of handwritten manuscripts, but for this collection only documents from the National Archives at Kew are HTR enabled. Users can also explore a directory of topics that can be located via A to Z keyword, people, county, or names of settlement houses and charitable institutions. An interactive timeline of events is available spanning from the Act for the Relief of the Poor in 1601 to the National Assistance Act in 1948. Additionally, users will find a small collection of essays (numbering four at the time of this publication), case studies (numbering eight at the time of publi-

FIGURE 1 PPSCVB Home Page

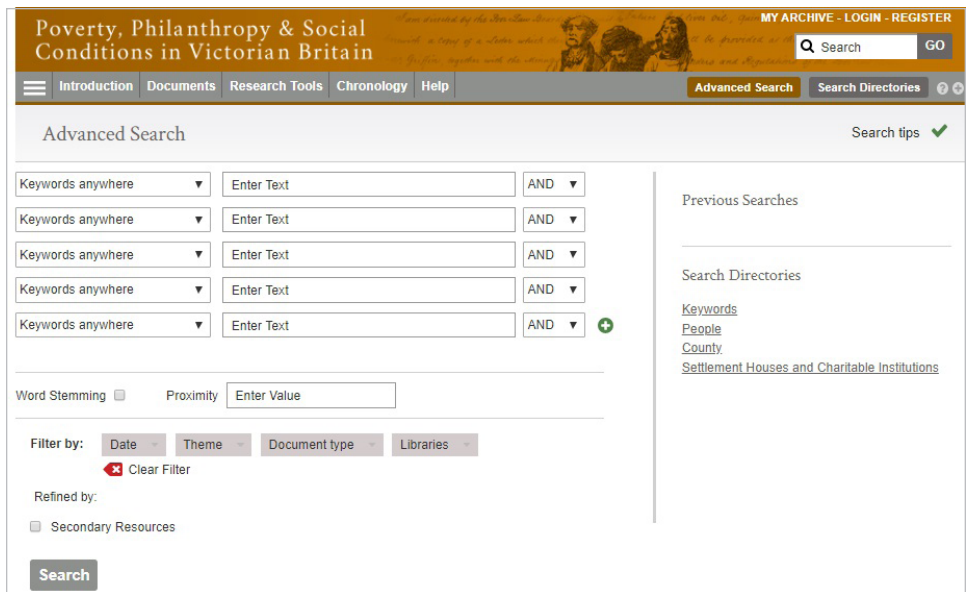


FIGURE 2 PPSCVB Header Menu



cation) and one video interview on the workhouse system with freelance author and historian Peter Higginbotham.

Usage statistics are COUNTER Release 4 and SUSHI compliant. COUNTER reports are exportable via XML or TSV format. MARC records, while currently not available at the time of this review due to delays related to COVID-19, will be forthcoming from the product home page. Adam Matthew Digital offers training via customized webinars and general collection guides. There are also brief video tutorials providing instructions on navigating the site and making use of various features. Onsite visits for training can be arranged by request. Technical support is accessible via e-mail. The My Archive feature permits users to create an account to save and organize results. Documents can be saved to My Bookshelf and images to My Lightbox. Adam Matthew Digital provides a Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT) to demonstrate compliance with Section 508 guidelines with the majority of criteria being supported and a few areas being partially supported. The VPAT indicates that videos include text transcriptions, and image slideshows have text titles and can be navigated via keyboard controls. The site does not depend upon color for users to understand content. The site notes that content is “navigable and readable with assistive technology” and that the “ability for assistive technology to read document transcriptions is forthcoming.”²

User Interface/Navigation/Searching

Poverty, Philanthropy and Social Conditions in Victorian Britain (PPSCVB) is a web based product that is accessible online from any

authenticated device with internet access. Performance is optimized for the following browsers: Microsoft Edge; Internet Explorer 10 and 11; and the most current versions of Firefox, Safari, and Google Chrome.

The home page provides a variety of options for searching including by typing a key word in the search box or selecting the advanced search option. By selecting advanced search, a dropdown box enables the options of searching by key word, title, people, or county with the use of Boolean terms, word stemming, or proximity. Results may be filtered by date, theme, document type, library, or secondary resources. HTR documents can be searched using phrase searching, but Boolean operators are not supported. The right side panel displays previous searches and a link for users to search the directories. There is also a link at the top of the page to Search Directories (see Figure 1).

Across the top of the primary header menu bar of each page, users can select Introduction, Documents, Research Tools, Chronology, or Help. There is a “hamburger button” beside these tabs which provides an expanded submenu of options under each heading. The Introduction section provides more information about the collection such as selection criteria, copyright information, and nature and scope. Documents provides options to view all documents, browse by theme, or perform an advanced search. Research Tools contains case studies, essays, information about HTR, directories, and links to external websites with complementary content. Chronology takes users to an interactive timeline of keys events of the period which are color

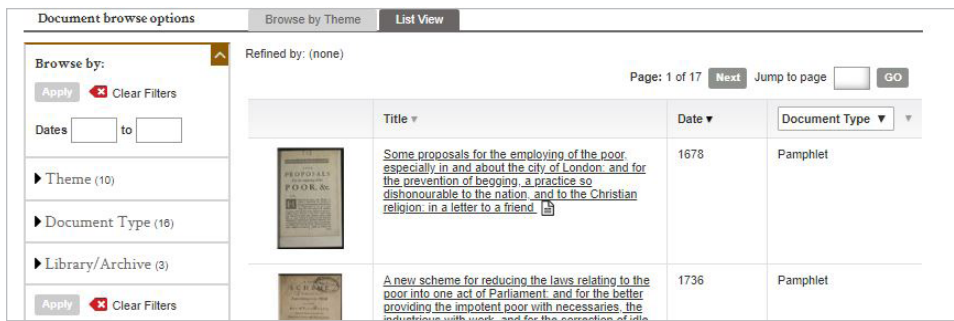


FIGURE 3 PPSCVB Browsing Options

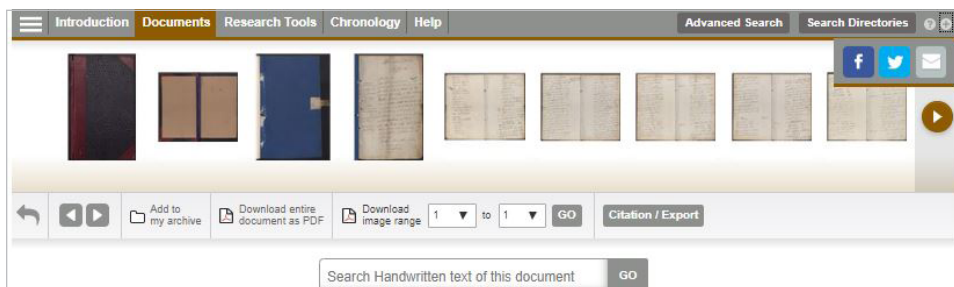


FIGURE 4 PPSCVB Document Options

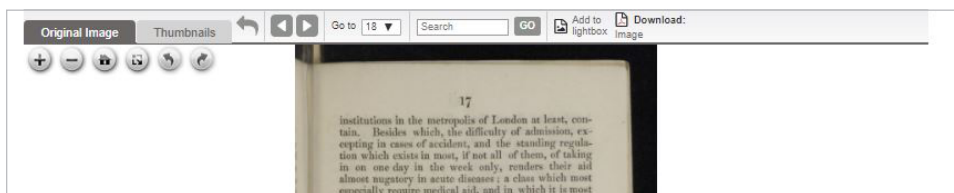


FIGURE 5 PPSCVB Image Options

coded by the topics of Reform and Legislation, Philanthropic Movements, General History, and Prime Ministers. The Help tab contains a page by page guide to the collection, frequently asked questions, tips for use in teaching, terms of use, privacy policy, and contact information (see Figure 2).

When selecting Documents users can explore by theme or view a list of documents sortable by title, date, and document type (see Figure 3). When browsing by theme, results can be refined by document type or library with results then being displayed in list view with the additional option of refining by date. Results default to sorting by ascending date order. Results cannot be limited to HTR documents.

Documents that are full-text searchable are denoted by a page icon and HTR searchable documents by a pencil icon with users entering their terms in the identified search box. After selecting a document, thumbnail images can be scrolled through using the next or previous buttons. The entire document or a selected range of images can be downloaded with the free application, Adobe Reader, being required. Citation/Export generates the information necessary to create a citation, but does not conform to a particular citation style. Results can be exported to RefWorks, EndNote, or Zotero. Add to My Archive can be selected to save a document. Results can be shared to Facebook, Twitter, or via e-mail by clicking the plus icon in the upper right hand of the primary header menu (see Figure 4).

Images can be increased or decreased in magnification, moved, or rotated. Once selecting a thumbnail image, users can select Original Image to access images one at a time or by Thumbnails to display all

thumbnails available for a document. To save images, users select Add to Lightbox (see Figure 5).

Critical Evaluation

Poverty, Philanthropy and Social Conditions in Victorian Britain is a digitized collection of primary archival materials from the National Archives at Kew, British Library, and Senate House Library focusing on the experience of poverty and efforts at governmental and philanthropic reform in Victorian Britain. The product is specialized in its access to unique records such as government correspondence with HTR searchable documents, annual reports of settlement houses, and pamphlets focused on social reform along with other supporting documents such as newspapers, articles, and books of the time. Adam Matthew Digital specializes in the digitization of primary resources in the humanities and social sciences, and as such offers clear, searchable digital documents and images in a clean, visually appealing, and user-friendly interface. Poverty, Philanthropy and Social Conditions in Victorian Britain can be accessed from a number of browsers and from an electronic device with internet connectivity. The product can be purchased for a one-time fee, but an annual hosting fee is required for ongoing access. Contract provisions are standard to the product, permitting for secure authentication for remote access and Interlibrary Loan. As pricing is determined by the size and full-time enrollment of an institution, the product may be affordable for various library sizes dependent upon the existence of programs that would benefit from such a highly specialized collection.

JSTOR is a well-known provider of academic journals, books, and other primary sources covering 75 disciplines, including the Victorian era. A valuable component in this annual subscription database is JSTOR 19th Century British Pamphlets, which was produced by Research Libraries UK and “contains the most significant British pamphlets from the 19th century held in research libraries in the United Kingdom”. The collection holds over 26,000 digitized pamphlets originating from collections in seven UK universities spanning 1545 to 1900.³ Such a compendium dwarfs the 1,622 pamphlets contained within Poverty, Philanthropy and Social Conditions in Victorian Britain which originate from just one archive, the Family Welfare Association Library. In addition, JSTOR indexes a number of renowned publications in Victorian research including Victorian Review, Victorian Studies, Victorian Literature and Culture, and Victorian Periodicals Review. Users will also enjoy the benefit of using the familiar and easily navigated JSTOR platform.

Historical Abstracts from EBSCO is a repository of historical articles from over 2,300 journals dating back to 1863 as well as 140 full-text e-books. In terms of the Victorian era, this database contains all of the publications noted in JSTOR as well as the oft-cited Journal of Victorian Culture published by Oxford University Press which covers the full range of topics in Victorian history. Desirable features of this database, which is available by annual subscription, are the intuitive EBSCO interface and the ability to search by time period.⁴

Purchase & Contract Provisions

Purchase and contract provisions are outlined in the Adam Matthew Digital Standard License Agreement. Authorized users are identified as “Persons Affiliated with the Licensee” including students (including distance education), employees, and walk-ins. Remote access is to be provided through secured authentication by those affiliated with the licensee. There are no restrictions against use of the product across a university system. The terms of use stipulate that the licensee may download, digitally copy, or print “a reasonable portion of

the Licensed Materials.” The terms of use permit for the creation of course packs and electronic reserves. Interlibrary loan or scholarly sharing is allowed but must include no more than 5% of the collection. The resource can be accessed by an unlimited number of users. The full terms of use may be viewed at <<http://www.povertyinvictorianbritain.amdigital.co.uk/Help/TermsOfUse>>.

Authentication

Access to the product is granted via IP authentication.

Author’s References

1. Mary Kay Jezzin (U.S. Publicity Consultant, Adam Matthew Digital), e-mail message to author, May 2020.
2. Adam Matthew Digital, “VPAT Section 508 Report,” Accessed May 8, 2020. <<http://www.povertyinvictorianbritain.amdigital.co.uk/Help/Section508>>
3. JSTOR, “19th Century British Pamphlets,” Accessed May 12, 2020. <<https://about.jstor.org/whats-in-jstor/primary-sources/19th-century-british-pamphlets/>>
4. EBSCO, “Historical Abstracts”, Accessed May 12, 2020. <<https://www.ebsco.com/products/research-databases/historical-abstracts-full-text>>

About the Author

Dawn Behrend is an Instruction and Outreach Librarian at Lenoir-Rhyne University. Ms. Behrend holds a B.A. in Psychology, M.A. in Clinical Psychology, MBA, and MLS. She has over 20 years of experience as a psychologist who continues to work part-time in private practice and is a second career librarian where she serves as Lenoir-Rhyne University library’s liaison to the departments of business and economics, mathematics, computer science, psychology, and counseling. ■