

# Research tip sheet

**Primary sources and oral histories of the time.** Sources such as diaries, letters, and other personal writings from the time period can strengthen your story in several ways. They can give insights into language patterns, the manner in which people expressed themselves, and how intimacy was expressed between friends, families, and lovers. They can also provide you with a variety of view points on how people viewed a particular event/historical happening.

**Experts.** No matter what period you are writing, there is likely someone who has spent a good portion of their life researching life during that time. Reach out to experts such as university professors or museum curators and ask for assistance with your research. They are often happy to share their knowledge, time permitting.

**Digitized newspapers.** Newspapers and other forms of journalism from the past can now be found digitized on the internet (no more microfiche!). While these can provide inspiration and information, remember that if someone in the future picked up one random newspaper from today, what was written might not accurately reflect reality.

**College courses.** Check out your local universities and see if they offer courses relevant to the time period you are interested in writing. Websites such as [www.edx.org](http://www.edx.org) offer the opportunity to audit history courses from prestigious universities in a variety of subjects--for free!

**Google books.** Google books is a great research tool. You can search for specific terms and discover numerous research books on a topic. Sometimes the information you need is available in the pages available on Google Books, or you can find the book on a retail book site. With older books that are no longer under copyright, you can find them online for free.

**Project Gutenberg.** [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org) is a free digitized library of books. The books can be read online or, because they are in the public domain, downloaded to your e-reader. This is an especially good source for memoirs from certain time periods, as well as academic writing and popular books of the time.

**Oral histories.** Depending on the time period, you can find digitized oral histories from people who lived then (e.g., slave narratives, American life histories, etc. at <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/oral/online.html>) that provide historical information, personal/emotional view points, and dialect/how people spoke.

**Libraries.** Physical libraries are always an important research tool, but many libraries now offer digital collections (photos, letters, etc.) that can be accessed from anywhere (e.g., <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/>).

**Theses and dissertations.** Graduate students do a ton of research on very specific topics that can be invaluable to your research.

**Citations.** One of the most valuable sources for a historical romance writer while researching. The bibliographies of research books that are helpful to you are the well from which researchers drew their knowledge. Drink up!