

Using Google "Books" for Postal (and Other) History Research

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Introduction

Historical studies have become easier to perform, now that the large search engines are available to find information on the World Wide Web (WWW). One of the major search engine companies is Google, whose website offers a variety of search capabilities.

In recent years, Google has initiated a project to scan and catalog books from libraries all over the world. The scanning process has included keyword creation, so that these books can be searched, just as you would search the web for information. If you have access to a web browser and the Internet, you should be able to perform the types of searches described in this document. If you wish to print any search results, you should, of course have a printer attached to your computer. No other special equipment or software should be required.

On a personal note, the presence of the Web (and Google) have revolutionized the degree of research that I can perform for my WW I book. When I was preparing the book in the 1990's, most historical information was only available in printed form, often stored in only a few places in the world. Now, many local historical societies in the United States have their own websites, much government material is on-line, and on-line encyclopedias offer information: the wealth of information available is amazing. Any future research that I perform will be greatly improved by using on-line search tools, such as Google.

Google Books Example

To get a taste of the capability, go to the website:

<http://books.google.com>

The web page will look something like:

Google Book Search - Mozilla Firefox


Bookmarks Tools Help

http://books.google.com/

lora Project Cruise Forums My eBay Yahoo! Mail: iGoogle post_del View On Black

Google Book Search

Video Gmail more



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New! [Google Book Search for mobile](#) is now available for **Android** and **iPhone** users.

Google has reached a [groundbreaking agreement](#) with authors and publishers.



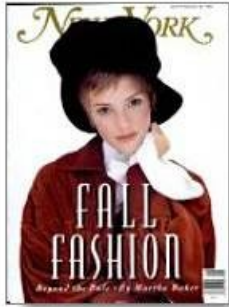
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Magazines

Interesting

The main search box (right after the Google logo) allows you to enter keywords for book searching.

First Search

Your interests will vary, of course, but for this demonstration, we will look for machine cancels. We've entered the keywords "machine cancels" into the search box.

When we click “Search Books”, the machinery at Google goes into action. Once the search is complete, we will be sent to a new page. The next image shows that page with some of the books that Google has found.



[Scott's monthly stamp journal - Page 20](#)

1980

When the French post office began to issue the slogans they were on the right hand side of the **machine cancels** so that the slogan generally was struck on ...

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[Domestic United States Military Facilities of the First World War 1917-1919 ... - Page 6](#)

by Robert Swanson, Robert Swanson - [Antiques & Collectibles](#) - 2000

The earliest and latest dates of usage for American flag **machine cancels** listed in this book are the results of my research only. ...

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[Standard Encyclopedia of Doremus **Machine Cancels**: A Classifying Research Work](#)

by Frederick Langford - [Postmarks](#) - 1988 - 60 pages

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[Standard Encyclopedia of Doremus **Machine Cancels**: A Classifying Research Work](#)

by Frederick Langford - [Postmarks](#) - 1968 - 32 pages

On cover: Doremus machine cancels.

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[The Potter and Vail **Machine Cancels**: "The Illinois **Machine Cancels**"](#)

by Jack Hilbing, Illinois Postal History Society, Illinois Postal History Society - [Cancellations \(Philately\)](#) - 1987 - 65 pages

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As with any Google search, the books are listed in the order that Google thinks is “important”. There are many pages of results available for this simple search. If you are interested in an in-depth study of the possibilities, be sure to view as many search result pages as you can.

Each entry contains the title of the book and page reference, if any. This name is a link to more information about the book, as well as any viewable contents.

Notice the term “Snippet View” on the first reference. This means that Google will only show you small parts of the book, with highlighting of the sentences containing the search terms. At the least, viewing the part of the book of interest should be helpful and show you the context

where the search terms were found. The publisher of the book has not allowed viewing of book sections.

The next entry, my book on First World War facilities, indicates "Limited Preview". This means that the publisher (me) has allowed viewers to see pages and partial pages of the book, in order to help them decide if they want to purchase it. When you view this book on Google, you will see a few parts of the book, and not be restricted to viewing only a sentence or two.

The remaining three entries indicate "No Preview Available". This means you cannot see any content of the books.

Quick Tips

Be sure to watch for books that are freely available, or are in the public domain. Many U. S. government publications, and books out of copyright, are freely available on Google. If a link indicates that you can "Download this book", by all means give it a try. You can download the PDF (Adobe Acrobat) file and use it for your research. Free PDF readers are available from Adobe for just about any computer system. See <http://www.adobe.com>.

Also, be sure to watch for indications that a book was scanned from a library. You may be able to check out the book through interlibrary loan. Of course, books on philatelic subjects (including mine) are available for check out from the American Philatelic Research Library. Look at the APS website for library information, <http://www.stamps.org>.

It might help to vary the search terms, or keywords, you use. While a major effort has been made by Google to assign keywords to publications, their terminology may not be the same as yours. The amount of information available with this tool is truly remarkable and we collectors and researchers should make use of it.

Results For a Book

When you click on any of the search result entries, you will be sent to a web page that contains one or more sections describing the specific book:

Google Book Search Search Books [My library](#) | [Sign out](#)

[About this book](#) **Preview this book** **Domestic United States Military Facilities of the First World War 1917-1919** By Robert Swanson, Robert

Page 6 [Go](#)

is a very important work, and is the natural **must have** for all collectors of First World War material. The first edition of this book (not the second edition) contains two appendices of particular use to me. Appendix 2 is based on a listing from the War Cover Philatelist, January and February 1938. It was compiled at that time by Milton Hurt and John P. Barr. The dates and names are incorrect in some areas, but do provide a starting place.

Appendix 3 of the book, compiled from a U.S. Post Office Department listing (also reproduced in the book) is more useful, but suffers from some shortcomings. For instance, the appendix suggests that the listing dates from mid-1917. Some of the listed camps, however, did not open until summer 1918. It is more likely that his listing was issued sometime in mid-1918. It appears, also, that this list was provided to help people send mail to the camps, and may not reflect actual branches or stations used to handle mail sent from soldiers and sailors at the camps. I make several references to these appendices in this book. The second edition of *The Postal History of the AEF*, while an excellent book, does not contain the domestic listings.

As we learn more about the correct names and designations of First World War camps, the information previously published by the War Cover Club may become less and less useful. I have included several questionable items in this book, taken from the previously-described Appendix sections of the

Several military facilities in the United States used American flag cancelling machines to postmark camp mail. *The Flag Cancel Encyclopedia* by Frederick Langford contains a listing of these machines, along with a small amount of descriptive material. When I mention "Langford", I am referring to his very useful book (an absolute **must** for machine cancel collectors.) Mr. Langford has also published a book on the Doremus cancelling machines. This brand of **machine** was used during the war at only one facility in this listing.

Starting in the early 1990's, I used Langford's flag **machine** listing as a starting point for generating a census of all flag cancel usage for the domestic camps. The earliest and latest dates of usage for American flag **machine cancels** listed in this book are the results of my research only. Many collectors, including Mr. Langford himself, have helped provide dates for this census, and their generosity is greatly appreciated.

In addition to Langford's book on the American flag machines, the Universal machines are described in the book *Universal Stamping Machine Company Catalog, Revision 1*, by Bart Billings, 1990. ISBN 0-9621461-2-1, no longer in print, but previously available from the Machine Cancel Society. There is an ongoing project within the Society to update these listings. I maintain a database of the Universal, since they were used at many camps. The

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The right-hand side of the display allows more searching within the book, and quick access to the Table of Contents. Links lower down on the right refer to possible vendors for the book. In the case of my book, I've self-published, but many other books can be purchased from on-line book sellers, such as Amazon.

Note that the keywords that were in the search are highlighted (in yellow) in the contents display.

Another Example Result

One of the search results for "machine cancels" was an auction catalog. Here is the snippet view of that catalog, with information as to the origin of the publication.

About this book **Catalogues of sales (no. 4001-4600)**



Key words and phrases

Shanghai, FINE Photo, Backstamps, Friedrichshafen, Handstamp, neat Folded, U.S. Postal Agency, Duplex Pmk, Fargo & Co, Germany, Machine Cancel, tied by clear, Rio de Janeiro, Postal Card, Sotheby, Lakehurst, Washington D.C., Corner Card, San Francisco, Phila

More details

Catalogues of sales (no. 4001-4600)
Published by
Item notes: no. 4037B
Original from the University of California
Digitized Dec 27, 2007

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Search in this book

6 pages matching **machine cancels** in this book

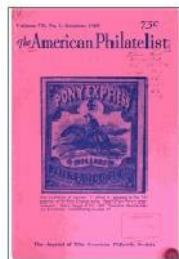


The entry indicates that this catalog is in the holdings of a university library, but be sure to check the APRL if you are interested in seeing the entire auction catalog.

Narrower Searching

Let's narrow down the machine cancel search, and try to find books on the cancels of Ohio. One of the entries found from this new search is the following:

About this book **The American Philatelist** By American Philatelic Association, American Philatelic Society



Key words and phrases

philately, American Philatelic Society, American Philatelist, souvenir sheet, Postal Stationery, airmail, PLATE BLOCKS, cvrs, stamp collectors, postage stamps, Philatelic Literature, Thuin, Postal History, Menton, overprint, Canada, J. T. DeVoss, Lord of Monaco, ASDA, Stamp Dealer

More details

The American Philatelist
By American Philatelic Association, American Philatelic Society
Published by American Philatelic Association, 1956
Item notes: v.79
Original from the University of California
Digitized Feb 7, 2007

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Search in this book

machine cancellation ohio Search

1 page matching **machine cancellation ohio** in this book

in as much as they had paid the proper amount of tax by the purchase of a government-issued stamp even though it was the wrong stamp.

Off-cover stamps which saw use in this illegal fashion can be detected by the type of cancellation they bear. Some have machine cancellations but more are found canceled by pen. The machine-type revenue cancellations may resemble a postmark at first glance.

References from web pages

[American Philatelic Society -- The American Philatelist](#)

Other editions

 [The American Philatelist](#)

This is another item in a university collection, in particular a back issue of “The American Philatelist”. The search, however, found only one page with all of the keywords on it. The snippet view is included in this result. You should study such a search result carefully to determine if this issue of the Philatelist would be useful to you. In any case, back issues should be obtainable from the APRL (or the university library indicated in the result page).

Another Search

Enough for now on machine cancels. Let's try to find information on the hospitals of the First World War. Such facilities were located both in the United States, as well as in Europe near the theaters of action.

Books Showing:



[History of the Pennsylvania Hospital Unit \(Base Hospital No. 10, U. S. A ...](#)

by United States. Army. Base Hospital no. 10 - [World War, 1914-1918](#) - 1921 - 253 pages

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[Little Grey Partridge: First World War Diary of Ishobel Ross Who Served With ...](#)

by Ishobel Ross - [Biography & Autobiography](#) - 1988 - 93 pages

First World War Diary of Ishobel Ross Who Served With the Scottish Women's
Hospitals ...

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[Little grey partridge: First World War diary of Ishobel Ross who served with ...](#)

by ROSS - 1988

First World War diary of Ishobel Ross who served with the Scottish Women's
Hospitals ...

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[World War Veterans' Legislation: Hearings Before the Subcommittee on ...](#)

by United States, United States Congress. House. Committee on **World War** Veterans' Legislation.
Subcommittee on **Hospitals**, Congress, House - [Military hospitals](#) - 1931

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[World War Veterans' Legislation.: Hearings Before the Subcommittee on ...](#)

by United States, Committee on **World War** Veterans' Legislation, Congress, House - [Hospitals,](#)
[military and naval](#) - 1931 - 171 pages

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The first search result entry shown might be of great interest, as it is a unit history for a Base Hospital. Note that the entry indicates "Full View". This book is no longer under copyright, and Google should allow you to view the entire book.


first world war hospitals Search Books My lib

Read this book **History of the Pennsylvania Hospital Unit (Base Hospital No. 10, U. S. A ...** By United States Army Base H

Page 3 Search in this book

PENNSYLVANIA HOSPITAL UNIT
Unit 10, A. S. H., 1917-1918
(BASE HOSPITAL No. 10, U. S. A.)

IN THE GREAT WAR



I am a soldier and now bound to France.
KING JOHN: I, I.
Then did Sir Knight abandon dwelling
And out he rode a coloneling.
BUTLER'S "HUSSEARS."

NEW YORK

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Conclusion

Do give Google Books a try when you are searching for information. As with any tool, it is best to "play" with it and find out what it can do for you. View many result pages, vary your search terms, and enjoy!

Next: Google Research

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