



The Civil War: A Newspaper Perspective. Accessible Archives,

Reviewed by Richard Jensen

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I highly recommend an outstanding CD-ROM for libraries, <cite>The Civil War: A Newspaper Perspective</cite>. Accessible Archives retyped the complete text of 11,000 articles and editorials from the <cite>New York Herald</cite>, <cite>Charleston Mercury</cite>, and the <cite>Richmond Enquirer</cite>, and scanned in about 700 maps and illustrations. There are no games or multimedia gimmicks, but the Folio Views search engine is very fast and powerful. The number of typos is small, especially considering the readability of some of the microfilm they used. Each of the twelve million words of text is easily searchable. All of the material is public domain. Since the <cite>Herald</cite> alone had sixty-five full-time war correspondents, the result is an unusually rich compilation of first-hand material. The CD was published in January 1995. Since then, I have used it frequently, recommend it highly, and have shown it to historians who have recognized it as a major breakthrough in sources. <p> Unfortunately, it is a DOS-only CD-ROM. It will run under Windows, but not on a Macintosh. It is expensive (\$500), but a good bargain for college and university libraries. I have not seen a published review of the CD, but reviews of the company's CD-ROM on the colonial <cite>Pennsylvania Gazette</cite> (Ben Franklin's newspaper) were quite favorable. <p> Basically, the user has instant access to every word in 11,000 stories from the <cite>New York Herald</cite>, 1861-65, and from two southern papers. That's about 50 full-length,

complete text newspaper stories for every week of the war. The selection policy was pretty basic: they retyped every report from the beginning, plus many editorials, and scanned in all maps. The rate of typos is quite low, and the graphics are excellent. Not only is every story easy to read--the microfilm era is dead!--but it is very easy to use. You type in a word like "casualties" and are immediately told there are 589 stories in which the word appears. Hit ENTER and they immediately appear on the screen, with the chosen word highlighted in color. <p> Last summer I co-authored a paper for the Gettysburg Civil War conference comparing death and dying in the Civil War and World War II. What I would have given for this resource! In five minutes last evening I discovered that there were 1,114 stories with the word "death," 589 with "casualties," 2731 with "wounded," 369 with "wound," 2,457 with "killed," and 2,669 with "loss." The search word is highlighted in color as you page through the article. Boolean searches that combine several words are possible, but relatively slow. With a CD-ROM like this a project that compares images of death in North and South, in victorious battles and defeats, early in the war and late, becomes not a PhD dissertation but an undergraduate term paper. <p> The historiography on the Civil War press is extensive. There seems to be general agreement that the <cite>Herald</cite> had by far the most coverage of the war, with upwards of forty correspondents at the front at one time. The <cite>Herald</cite>

also had the most and the best maps on the war. It appears that southern papers relied primarily on Press Association correspondents, so they all ran pretty much the same battle stories. Major stories covering the local scene in Charleston and Richmond are included, but minor stories, advertising, and foreign news is all excluded. Historians criticize the <cite>Herald</cite> for its politics (waver- ing), and for often sloppy reporting. <cite>The New York Tribune</cite> had a reputation for bet- ter written and more analytical stories. Of course, no one has put the <cite>Tribune</cite> on CD- ROM. <cite>The New York Times</cite>, consid- ered on a par with the <cite>Herald</cite> in qual- ity, but much lower in volume of material, is widely available on microfilm, but we all know how difficult this is to use. To browse 100 stories on microfilm is a major chore; it is easy and in- deed rather fun in the Accessible Archives CD- ROM. <p> Note: <p> For more information on the history of the <cite>Herald</cite> & the <cite>Tribune</cite>, see Richard Kluger, <cite>The Paper</cite> (1986); and for elaborate detail, J. Cutler Andrew's, <cite>The North Reports the Civil War</cite> (1955) and his <cite>The South Reports the Civil War</cite> (1970). See also Douglas Fermer, <cite>James Gordon Bennett and the New York herald: A Study of Editorial Opinion in the Civil War Era, 1854-1867</cite> (1986) and Quintus C. Wilson, "The Confederate Press Associ- ation," <cite>Journalism Q</cite> 26 (1949) 160ff. <p>

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