

Research 101: Researching and Using Online Materials

Internet searches, like those using Google, are great for many types of research. Internet searches, however, cannot yet search and return all of the information already available online. Learning how to conduct research is a process of learning all of the many search tools available—online searches, specialized computer searches through paid database subscriptions, and other searches for specific information or for more information on how to search.

Search Engine Basics

Online search engines like Google are called “search engines” because they have many component parts that power the overall search. Some of these parts operate by checking for the number of times a search word or phrase is used, the type of site where the site is used (educational, commercial), the type of search being done (a Froogle product search or general Google or MSN or Yahoo search), and more. While search engines continue to improve, they still cannot yet index all of the materials that are online. Sometimes this is because the online materials are too many layers deep or their web addresses are not what the search engines expect, or for one of many other reasons. Often, material embedded within other large collections—like those in digital libraries—is not fully included in search engines.

(Re)Searching

Researching involves many steps, including repeated online searching. For instance, the Ephemeral Cities project includes maps and other materials related to the Tampa area across time. In Google Maps, users can see the Tampa area as it looks now.

Searching for Ybor City in any major search engine will return current and historical information on Ybor City as well as maps for Ybor City. However, simple searches for Ybor City do not return historical maps. For some research projects, the material available through a commercial search engine alone is enough. Most academic research projects, however, require more information.

For a research project on Ybor City to investigate the history of the city, land use, its relationship with Tampa, or many others, more data would be necessary. Researchers could add additional phrases to their web search to find additional sources. For instance, a researcher could rely on existing knowledge—say the researcher knew that Sanborn Insurance Maps were widely used across the United States and offered detailed maps of cities over time—the researcher could search for “Ybor City” and “Sanborn Insurance Maps” or “Ybor City” and Sanborn. Depending on the search engine being used and the keywords or phrases used, this would likely return a number of links from news sources and libraries like the [University of Florida's Digital Collection of Sanborn Maps](#). Even though the search engine may give information about libraries in relation to the Sanborn Maps, the search engine links may or may not lead users directly into the full collections.

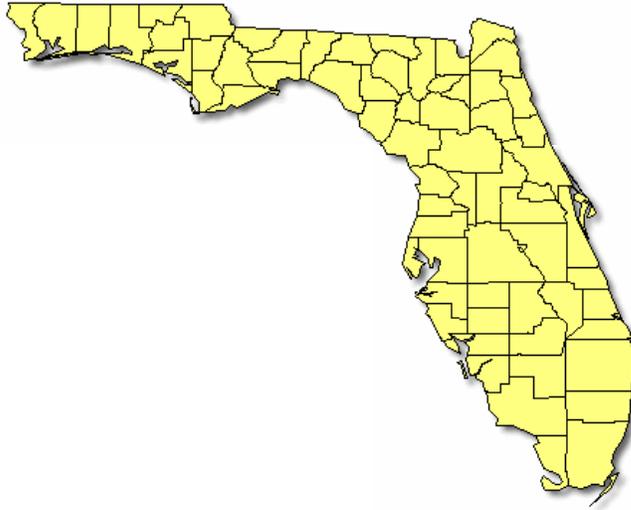
In order to find materials within the larger collections housed at each library, users may need to check within the individual library collections. For instance, to see the Sanborn Maps within the University of Florida's Digital Collections, users might need to go into the Digital Collections: <http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/UFDC/>.

The main page for the Digital Collection lists the Sanborn Collection: <http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/UFDC/?c=sanborn>.

Going into the Sanborn Collection has a link to “Select Subcollections.” Clicking that link takes users to the Ephemeral Cities Project. While users may find this through a search engine, they may not. The Ephemeral Cities Project enhances the interface for the Sanborn maps, but Ephemeral Cities alone may or may not be as relevant based on the search terms and search engine used. Exploring the Digital Collections directly leads to many items that would be much more difficult to find through a regular online search.

Online Searching in New Ways

Using the Ephemeral Cities project, choose to search using the map and click on Hillsborough County to get to Ybor City and Tampa.



Clicking on Hillsborough County brings up a new page on the full county with a list of maps and information about those maps.

Hillsborough County

Established: 1834
Etymology: Named after Wills Hill, Viscount Hillsborough of England.
Major Cities: Plant City, Tampa, Temple Terrace

There are 12 map sets for this area. Sort by:

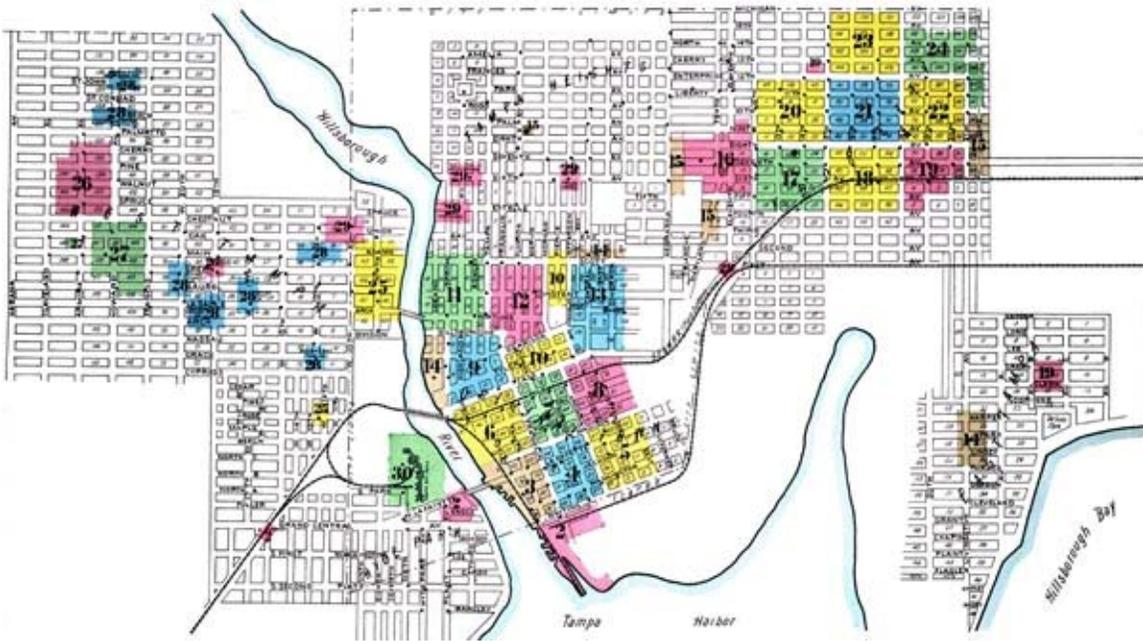
Plant City

- [Plant City, Hillsborough County, Florida, 1909 \[visual index | full citation \]](#)
- [Plant City, Hillsborough County, Florida, 1914 \[visual index | full citation \]](#)
- [Plant City, Hillsborough County, Florida, 1919 \[visual index | full citation \]](#)

Tampa

- [Tampa, Hillsborough County, Florida, 1922 Supplemental volume \[visual index | full citation \]](#)
- [Tampa, Hillsborough County, Florida, 1884 \[visual index | full citation \]](#)
- [Tampa, Hillsborough County, Florida, 1887 \[visual index | full citation \]](#)
- [Tampa and Ybor City, Hillsborough County, Florida, 1889 \[visual index | full citation \]](#)
- [Tampa and Ybor City, Hillsborough County, Florida, 1892 \[visual index | full citation \]](#)
- [Tampa, including West Tampa and Ybor City, Hillsborough County, Florida, 1895 \[visual index | full citation \]](#)
- [Tampa, including West Tampa, Ybor City, Port Tampa City and Port Tampa, Florida, 1899 \[visual index | full citation \]](#)
- [Tampa, including Ybor City, West Tampa, Port Tampa City and Port Tampa, Hillsborough County, Florida \[visual index | full citation \]](#)
- [Tampa, Hillsborough County, Florida, 1915 \[visual index | full citation \]](#)

Now, clicking on any of the visual index links brings up a map that links to other more detailed maps of the area for that year. For instance, clicking on the Tampa and Ybor City 1889 [visual index](#) brings up a large map of the entire area.



Using the visual index, clicking on particular areas brings up the more detailed maps.

The more detailed maps can be very useful to see how the area has changed over time. Users familiar with the general landscape of Tampa and Ybor City can simply zoom in on the areas and see how the areas were. They can then compare that information with what they already know or they can use a tool like Google Maps as a way to compare the areas.

Ephemeral Cities

SEARCH

Search Ephemeral Cities

Return to UFDC

VIEWS

Related Map Sets

Full Citation

All Map Sheets

Features } **Links**

✓ Streets } **Links**

Visual Index

Zoomable Image

Map Image

Those less familiar with the area, like those who are not sure about the general layout of the roadways and those who might not know particular reference points, can also search through the features and streets views for the maps. These index views are available from the links on the left and link to pages like the one in the image on the next page for the street index.

The [street index online](#) includes the full index of all streets on the maps for that year, from Adams to Zack.

Title: Tampa, including West Tampa, Ybor City, Port Tampa City and Port Tampa, Florida, 1899

Index of Streets

A		F	
Adams	25	Franklin	9
Areh	25	Franklin	10
Areh	28	Franklin	12
Armina Avenue	26	Franklin	12
Ashley	2	G	
Ashley	3	Germer	32
Ashley	3	Gladstone Alley	13
Ashley	6	Governor	13
Ashley	9	Governor	14
Ashley	11	Grace	28
Ashley	29	Green	19
B		Green	at West Tampa 25
Bay, E	13	Green	at West Tampa 27
Bay, E	14	Green	at West Tampa 28
Beaeh	28	H	
Bradley	32	Harper	14
C		Harrison	9

Activity

- Searching through the old maps of Tampa and Ybor City, choose one street, building, or particular structure on the map (a railroad line or a park perhaps) and try to find information about that street using a general search engine.
- Then, search for the maps of that street within Ephemeral Cities.
- Then, make a list of other Digital Libraries to search. This could include Digital Libraries for universities (like the University of South Florida, University of Central Florida, University of Miami, Florida International University, University of Florida, and others), public libraries (what public libraries are in the local area?), historical preservation initiatives like those from the Library of Congress or related to state or local groups (like PALMM, www.palmm.fcla.edu), and others. Try searching for “Digital Libraries” and “Digital Collections” in a regular search engine like Google to find more places to search separately.
- Using this list, find any Digital Collections and search for information about Tampa and Ybor City.

Assignment

Write a short essay (1-2 pages) describing your search process and what you learned. Make sure to answer the following questions.

- What did you find in searching through Ephemeral Cities and other Library and Digital Collections?
- Did most of the information come up when you searched using a general search engine? What did and what didn't?
- By knowing more about how search engines work, will you change any of your search methods? Will you use quotes more often? Directories? More words and/or phrases? Different types of terms?
- For any research projects, where and how else you might now search online in new ways?

Points to Think About

- What isn't online? Think of a list of general topics and items that aren't likely to be online.
- Of the information or materials not online, what most needs to be online? Health, historical, educational, political?
- Read about folksonomies and ontologies. Using these and other tools, how can users help share more information and make sure it can be found?
- In terms of what is and is not online, how could those objects could be contextualized or organized to better aid discovery and usability?
- What makes a good search engine user? Why?