

## General works

### RR 2010/351 17th and 18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers

Gale Cengage, in association with The British Library  
London

URL: <http://gale.cengage.co.uk/product-highlights/history/17th-18th-century-burney-collection-newspapers-.aspx>

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**Keywords** Eighteenth century, Electronic media,  
Newspapers, Seventeenth century, United Kingdom

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When the Reverend Charles Burney, classical scholar and brother of novelist Fanny Burney, died in 1817, the British Museum paid £13,500 to acquire his library, comprising 13,000 books and 700 volumes of newspapers. Burney's collection of various printed press, pamphlets, proclamations and Acts of Parliament now spans over 1,270 titles, and as such is the largest single collection of English news media of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The original papers, fragile with the decay of age, are no longer accessible in the British Library reading rooms, and for many years the only alternative has been archived copies on microfilm. For historians and academics wishing to utilise this "rich compendium of British history", the search was therefore rather like that of the proverbial needle in a haystack! Burney himself organised his collection by date, binding different titles together, and the sheer wealth of material amassed since his death – over one million pages, incorporating further issues added to the collection by the British Library – inevitably limited access to this fascinating primary source. Digitisation of the microfilm has not only made searching easier, but also opened up the Burney collection to the wider public, as it is now available online by subscription in schools and libraries. Gale Cengage have added the collection to their Infotrac database of

newspapers, scanning each individual article so that users can quickly and easily search by keyword the entire range of London, provincial and foreign publications in the collection. The result is exciting, instructive and useful!

On September 3, 1666, the *London Gazette* apologised to its readers for, "The ordinary course of this Paper having been interrupted by a sad and lamentable accident of Fire lately happened in the City of London". Only a few months earlier, in April 1666, the same newspaper reported a tally of only 26 deaths from the plague in the City, as opposed to 652 the previous November. It is fascinating to read about such "great" historical events in contemporary sources, taking in at the same time a broader perspective of society at the time – advertisements for the "Hindoostahnee Dictionary" in the *Calcutta Chronicle* (1788), *Prices of Merchandise in London, 1682*, or the latest society gossip in periodicals such as *The World* (1787-1794). Newspapers and other sources can be searched by title, including extensive and complete runs of the *Daily Courant* (the first English daily, starting in 1702), *London Evening Post*, *London Gazette* and *Public Advertiser*. Periodicals range from *Tatler* (1709-1711), theatrical journals such as *The Prompter* (1734-1736) and *How Do You Do?* (1796), to the satirical *Grub Street Journal* (1730-1737). American, French and colonial titles are also featured, such as individual issues of the *Journal de Paris* and the *Barbados Gazette*. Searching by date allows historians to read around important events, gaining a measure of the economic, social and literary effects of such ground breaking news as the American Declaration of Independence and the French Revolution (announced in the *English Chronicle* on July 18, 1789 with a proto-headline of "French Revolution!!!" – "The Bastille was Blown Up!"). Keywords can also be cross-referenced by title and date to search for specific items.

Being able to search through this fascinating collection online is practical, allowing for instant access to clear and printable copies of historical papers, and also addictive. A quick browse of the many publication titles available, for instance, reveals an eclectic list of unique and unusual sources from the seventeenth to early nineteenth centuries – *Lover* (1714, offering romantic advice to young men), *Porcupine* (1800), *Traiteur* (1780), and *The Mock Press, or The Encounter of Harry Lungs and Jasper Hem!*

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