

PRODUCT NEWS

Gale World Scholar Creating Researchers

FEATURED PRODUCT

Research is a critical skill for any student, but it is also one of the most difficult to teach effectively. Despite courses focused on the research process at many educational levels, some students still find themselves stymied by information overload when confronting the array of resources available in today's digital libraries. Gale, part of Cengage Learning, is setting out to change that with its Gale World Scholar line, which launched in April with Gale World Scholar: Latin America & the Caribbean.

The Gale World Scholar collections are targeted at high school, undergraduate, and graduate students doing research on particular geographic regions. They contain a wealth of multidisciplinary information on topics ranging from industries and economics to religion and gender studies, featuring both contemporary and historical resources that run the gamut from recent scholarly research to historical

newspaper documents, monographs, and maps.

But beyond simply providing access to a selection of archives, Gale World Scholar is designed to offer guidance on the research process to students and to give students a way to determine which specific collections and archives will best cover the research they need to conduct.

"The idea here is really to create researchers out of students," says Ray Abruzzi, associate publisher for digital collections at Gale. To help guide users toward the information they need, Gale World Scholar is organized around portal pages on nearly 300 topics and is curated by an expert advisory board. The portals provide some basic information on each topic to get students started and serve as gateways into different areas of the archive.

"It gives them enough information to start using archival material sensibly, rather than dumping them off into an archive

of primary sources where they'll have a lot of trouble figuring out where to start," Abruzzi says.

Gale World Scholar: Latin America & the Caribbean also contains many statistics collected from organizations including UNESCO, the World Bank, and the CIA. However, rather than presenting the statistics as static charts and graphs, Gale World Scholar allows researchers to build animated graphs that feature the statistics they are looking for in the format they want, allowing factors such as birthrate in a particular country to be visually tracked over a set time frame. The animations are all generated on-the-fly by the platform based on user parameters.

The Latin America & the Caribbean collection is the first of the Gale World Scholar collections to be released and has served as the prototype for the Gale World Scholar platform as a whole. Collections are also currently planned for the Middle



East, China, Southeast Asia, India, and Africa. According to Abruzzi, each collection is being carefully designed to focus on the topics and resources needed by people conducting local and area studies on that specific region. "We bring together scholars [and] librarians, and we sit down with them and say, 'What do you use in your research?'" says Abruzzi.

Gale is also reacting to the realities of how students do their research. "If I'm a student confronting the databases, there's usually not a publisher standing over my shoulder, or a librarian, for that matter," says Abruzzi. "We're telling them, 'Here's what's in here, here's what the research supports, here's what you can expect to find and what you can't.'"

➔ KURT SCHILLER