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[Internet Resource]

Victorian Popular Culture. Adam Matthew Digital. ISBN Contact publisher for pricing (based on Carnegie Classification and JISC); includes nominal hosting fee, payable every 5 years.

URL: <http://www.amdigital.co.uk/>

[Visited Dec'08] Adam Matthew Digital conjures up a dynamic digital collection of unique primary sources describing popular entertainment in the US, the UK, and Europe in the period from 1779 to 1930. This graphically rich portal currently offers access to only one collection, Spiritualism, Sensation and Magic, but two others--Circuses, Sideshows and Freaks; and Music Hall, Theatre and Popular Entertainment--are scheduled for 2009 and 2010, respectively. The 300-plus artifacts in the current collection, selected from manuscripts at the Senate House Library at the University of London and the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin, are curiosities culled for their rarity and interest for scholars in the areas of magic, spiritualism, animal magnetism, mesmerism, and parapsychology. Included are high-quality color scans of performance posters, pamphlets, journals and magazines of the period, such as *The Zoist: A Journal of Cerebral Physiology and Mesmerism and Their Applications to Human Welfare* and *The Sphinx: A Monthly Magazine for Magicians and Illusionists*, as well as eight volumes of Houdini's scrapbooks. Visitors may conduct a general search of the collection or search specifically in fields such as title, author, source library, and document type/subtype. Also available is a full list of the contents, an alphabetical list, and lists by library and document type, along with a list of popular searches. The sleight of hand that enables one to view documents is impressive. One may zoom into and move around them, view the scan or a transcription of a document, and download a PDF or print it. Further resources include an introductory essay by Peter Otto (Univ. of Melbourne), a slide-show generator, a clever drag-and-drop chronology, a glossary (ever wonder who coined the term "ectoplasm"?), biographies, and a bibliography. An extensive help section offers search tips and advice for teachers. The database itself is by no means inexpensive, but the collections provided are truly unparalleled and available nowhere else. While only those who wish to delve deeper into the world of magic and spiritualist séances may be spurred to subscribe, those who do will be treated to one of the finest digital collections available on the subject.

Summing Up: Highly recommended. Upper-level undergraduates through faculty/researchers. -- C. Cox, *Western Washington University*