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REFERENCE

Social & Behavioral Sciences

The following review will appear in the March 2010 issue of CHOICE. The review is for your internal use only until our publication date of 01 March 2010

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[Internet Resource]

Defining Gender, 1450-1910. 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'09] Designed as a teaching tool to encourage undergraduate work with primary sources, this database provides access to approximately 120,000 pages of documents from 21 British and European libraries and archives. Database users can access manuscript, printed, and illustrative materials--most digitized in their entirety--in a variety of ways. The Documents and the Essays sections are organized according to five themes: Conduct and Politeness, Domesticity and the Family, Consumption and Leisure, Education and Sensibility, and the Body. For each theme, academics have prepared two to four brief essays in which they reference the primary documents, which are hyperlinked. Also featured is a tab titled Teaching and Classroom Issues, with information on fair use, copyright, permissions, and related topics. <p>*Defining Gender* offers additional ways to access its material, including the View Names and View Topics indexes; buttons for each are located on all page headers. The topical index, which features 250-plus entries, lists the expected subjects (e.g., Childbirth, Courtship) but also some curious entries (e.g., Muscular Christianity, Rifle Corps). Both the topical and name indexes allow searchers to specify the gender of the document author and to search by printed or manuscript source. The Help page mentions a Places index, but this reviewer could not locate it. A simple keyword search box on each page header provides the most immediate access to the material. The database does not provide full-text searching for the documents, only for the essays. Rather, the database searches index terms assigned to each document. In reviewing the terms for one document, two transcription errors were noted on one page alone; the word "wound" was transcribed as "hound," and "The Earl of Chesterfields Powder/To Help Delivery" was transcribed as "To Help Delivery Powder." Search results are affected by the accuracy of indexing, whether the indexing is done by machines or humans. The database allows searching with Boolean operators, wild cards, and word proximity; it offers the option of limiting by century. Subscribers will need Adobe software to view, manipulate, and download documents. Download time for users with modems may be slow due to the large size of some PDFs. Overall, this is a thoughtfully constructed and well-organized database, with quality content and an interpretive framework crafted by experts in the field of gender studies. Appealing to libraries will be Adam Matthew Digital's flat fee-based structure and its willingness to work with networks and consortiums at no additional cost. Purchasing institutions receive backup copies of all digital content on DVD. This database will be a worthwhile investment for most academic libraries. **Summing Up:** Recommended. Lower-level undergraduates through faculty/researchers. -- L. K. Speer, Southeast Missouri State University