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Review of Canadian Electronic Library: dèsLibris [Database]

Content

[dèsLibris](#) is an electronic books and documents database offered by the Canadian Electronic Library (CEL). It consists of more than 85,000 titles, including books and other documents from approximately 80 publishers, 65 think tanks, and over 300 public policy organizations. Book publishers include major Canadian university presses (French and English), a variety of literary presses, and a large number of other commercial presses that cover Canadian topics. A large number of up-to-date titles are available full-text, online.

Searches on some sample topics yield the following results:

Table 1

Sample searches

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Published 2015–2019</u>	<u>Full-text (all years)</u>
environment	13,204	2,159	11,323
economy	12,467	9,098	11,592
women	5,288	1,112	2,931
politics	11,321	6,995	8,580
immigration	2,318	935	1,816
First Nations	2,217	832	1,485
climate	3,137	1,680	2,721
foreign relations	1,202	310	765

A separate listing on the database by publisher shows that university presses constitute a significant portion of books in the database and that some university presses are

better represented than others. Literary presses such as House of Anansi, ECW, Insomniac Press, and Coach House are also well represented (although not always in full-text):

Table 2

Selected university presses and literary presses

<u>Press</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Published 2015–2019</u>	<u>Full-text (all years)</u>
University of Toronto Press	4,270	749	1,626
McGill-Queens University Press	3,217	507	2,691
UBC Press	1,274	240	700
University of Alberta Press	323	82	323
University of Calgary Press	304	51	304
University of Manitoba Press	181	181	181
University of Ottawa Press	185	48	185
Presses de l'Université du Québec	1,394	196	1,394
Presses de l'Université de Montreal	602	146	603
Presses de l'Université Laval	1,085	370	1084
House of Anansi	292	59	0
Coteau Books	148	44	0
ECW Press	744	211	699
Insomniac Press	241	0	241
Coach House Books	229	73	229
Thistledown	2	1	0

As the information above shows, books published by three major French-language Quebec academic presses are available almost completely in full-text; the same cannot be said of the other academic presses where the portion of books in full-text varies considerably.

English-Canadian literature is better represented than French-Canadian literature in [dèsLibris](#). Even well known authors such as Roch Carrier, Gabrielle Roy, Marie-Claire Blais, Michael Tremblay, and Anne Hébert are only represented by a few titles, often in English translation. Quebec literary presses are virtually absent.

Mainstream English language press titles tend to be well represented in this database, frequently in full-text, as is shown by the following examples:

Table 3*Sample English language presses*

<u>Press</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Published 2015–2019</u>	<u>Full-text (all years)</u>
Dundurn Press	2,049	382	2,023
Fernwood Press	295	0	292
Harbour Publishing	171	0	1
Heritage House	880	60	867
New Society Publishers	355	112	55
Pembroke Publishers	154	37	0

Although the list of presses, in descending order by number of titles, lists university presses at the top, the database as a whole contains more public documents than books. [dèsLibris](#) contains slightly over 18,000 books, but contains almost 60,000 public documents, with major collections in health, law, education, and titles published by think tanks. A collection of 389 titles pertains to travel guides.

Administrative tools

Database administrators can have access to a significant amount of information about the use of the database in the member institution's library. A drop-down menu under "Library Dashboard" offers a variety of types of data including lists of titles that have been accessed, the number of pages viewed, the number of pages printed out, and sections copied. An access denied list, which includes the number of denials, can be exported to an external source such as Excel. It is not clear if the usage statistics that are generated by the system are Counter compliant.

There are also title and publisher lists as well as a library wish list where a database administrator can store lists for purchase consideration and receive alerts pertaining to new content that is being added to the database. The Library Administration Help Center provides a useful overview of the other features of the "Library Dashboard." A separate section includes an overview of the titles that are licensed and available and shows the number of titles that are available through subscription, through perpetual access, through open access, and the number of titles that are not yet licensed. Clicking on the box beside any of these categories yields a detailed list of the titles together with thumbnail views of the cover image of each title.

Searching

There are two main search modes: the user can use a default search mode that searches all fields or an advanced search mode where the user can enter single or multiple terms and restrict terms to one specific field. Unlike in some online databases, it is not possible at the outset to specify one field as author, another as subject,

publisher, series, genre, etc. In the advanced search, it is possible to limit the results by year(s) of publication, by full-text, or by books or public documents, but also to exclude titles available by subscription or by perpetual access. Having entered a search term (or terms), the user can use the “Refine Results” option to subsequently limit the search results by a large number of additional categories including public documents, books, open access books, Canadian contributors, and even a specific press or publisher, author (personal or corporate), language, genre, and audience. There is additional information in a link to “Advanced Search Tips” that explains how the software deals with truncation, foreign language accents, punctuation marks, Boolean operators, and other search features.

When examining an individual title for which there is a full-text license, a user can click on “Title Details,” where there is the option to read the title full-text online or, in some cases, to download a PDF version of the text. Provided that the library has a multiple user license for a book, there does not appear to be a limit to the number of simultaneous users of a given title.

There is also the option, under “Title Details,” to add a title to a personal bookshelf. A user must create a personal account to take advantage of this feature. The contents of the bookshelf can be viewed and changed at any time, but it is not easy to export the list in the bookshelf to other destinations. This reviewer, using a PC with Windows 7, was only able to export the titles using Outlook Express. It would be beneficial to have the option of exporting the list of titles to any desired location and to have a “Select All” option that prevents the user from having to click on each individual title in the bookshelf before exporting the list of titles. For books that are available full-text and online, a user may choose to click on a link in the viewing mode that provides a complete bibliographic citation of the book. This citation can be copied and pasted into a bibliography or into a bibliographical database.

In terms of accessibility, a zoom feature makes it possible to display pages that are viewed in full-text in a sliding scale of magnification up to 400%, but there is no option to link the page that is displayed to any form of audio output.

Summary

The combination of university press titles, titles from other established Canadian presses, and material published by government or non-governmental organizations and Canadian think tanks makes this a highly useful database. Users who wish to view a majority of the titles full-text online will need to be able to access many of the titles through other full-text databases.

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