Klapp-Online: Bibliographie d’histoire littéraire française

doi:10.5260/chara.19.3.26

Composite Score: ★★★★ 1/8

Reviewed by: Michael David Miller
McGill University, Montréal, Québec

Abstract

The Klapp-Online is a specialized bibliography in French language literary criticism published for the first time in 1956 by Librarian Otto Von Klapp. It is published by the German publishing house Vittorio Klosterman and is most commonly known as the Bibliographie d’histoire littéraire française. It is often considered to be the premier comprehensive bibliographic resource in French language literary criticism. As of 2013, Astrid Klapp-Lehrmann and her team launched the online version of the bibliography known as the Klapp-Online. This specialized and purely bibliographic database covers multilingual literary criticism published via journals, monographs, and conference proceedings from across the planet. Literary criticism coverage ranges from the Middle Ages to twenty-first century French and francophone literary studies. The online searchable interface of the database covers publication years of the Klapp from 1991 to present day with optical character recognition (OCR) PDF versions of previous years (1991 to 1956) available for download. With 1,420 indexed journal titles and over 95,000 indexed monograph titles and reviews, including both academic and cultural content, the Klapp-Online is an essential resource for all universities with programmes in Francophone literary studies.

Pricing Options

The Klapp-Online offers a very simple and twofold flat-rate subscription model: €893 is for member countries of the European Union, and €1,063 for countries outside of the European Union. Consortia receive a 10% discount with ten to nineteen subscribers and a 20% discount with twenty or more subscribers. However, the website clearly states that this percentage discount only applies to the Klapp-Online and not the printed edition of the bibliography. However, institutions that subscribe to the Klapp-Online benefit from a special discount of 43% on the €334 price of the printed version of the bibliography which decreases the price of the printed bibliography to €144. It is also important to note that prices of the subscription are uniquely in Euros

Product Overview/Description

The Klapp-Online is the web-based bibliographic database of the print bibliography, la Bibliographie d’histoire littéraire française, with equivalent titles in German, der Bibliographie der französischen Literaturwissenschaft, and the Bibliography of French Literature in English. The online version of the Klapp was launched in 2013 and, at the publication of this review, offers bibliographic coverage of French language literary criticism from 1956 to present. Years 1991 to 2015 are consultable via the online database search engine, and years 1956 to 1990 have been digitized in PDF format with optical character recognition (OCR). All Klapp-Online subscribers have access to the PDFs via the bibliography’s online interface. Literary criticism for the Klapp covers all aspects and eras of French language literature from the Middle Ages to contemporary French and Francophone literature published across the planet in multiple languages.

According to the Klapp-Online’s website, the database contains “98,724 book articles, 155,519 journal articles, 95,944 monographs and reviews, [and] 1,420 processed periodicals” <http://www.klapp-online.de/start_klapp-online_uber_en.html>. Within the 98,724 book articles, scholars will also find conference proceedings. Journal coverage is heavily concentrated in Europe with 78% of all journals coming from this region, North America has the second largest representation with 20% of all journals, and the rest of the world represents 2% of all journals.

At a more granular level, 86.6% of all journals originate from eight countries: 33.8% from France, 15% from the USA, 9.8% from Italy, 9.6% from Germany, 6.2% from the UK, 4.6% from Canada (1.6% from Québec), 4.6% from Belgium (1.5% from Wallonia), and 3.8% from Spain. The study of French language literature is a global discipline, which begs the question: where are the South American, African, and Asian journal titles? The concentrations in France, Canada/Québec, and Belgium/Wallonia are understandable given that they are francophone nations. The USA is also understandable given the vast network of universities. However, it still is peculiar to see an absence of Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Indian journals in this bibliography, and worrisome to see a near total absence of journals from francophone Africa.

With regards to database record updates, the Klapp-Online receives an annual update of approximately 16,000 new bibliographic records. The annual update happens concurrently with the publication of that year’s print edition. This date tends to fall in the first two months of the new year.

A particularity of the Klapp is that of the 1,420 journal titles that are processed, only the individual articles that relate to French language literature are included in both the Klapp-Online and in the printed version of the bibliography. There is no systematic indexing of the complete journals as we see in other more generalist literary databases. Every year, on average, about 300 journals are processed and have selected articles indexed in that year’s edition of the Klapp.

Regarding collection development, the Klapp is a very powerful tool. For each new publication of the Klapp, the Généralités section contains a selection of important French language scholarly monographs published that previous year. For librarians collecting in French language literature not currently consulting the Généralités section for annual collection development, this list is often seen as a reference in
important titles published that calendar year. Librarians developing in French language literature should be reading through this list annually.

The Klapp-Online’s target audience is research-intensive scholars focused on French language literature from the Middle Ages to twenty-first century. It also is useful for reviews of scholarly monographs published in French language literature (Classique Garnier, Harmatan, and Droz). These book reviews can be particularly useful for collection development purposes.

User Interface/Navigation/Searching

INTERFACE LANGUAGE
Klapp-Online has a dynamically resizing interface, perfect for mobile devices, and is available in three languages: French, German, and English. Although the bibliographic metadata is primarily in French, it also may be in Italian, German, Spanish, and English. It is only the interface that has been completely translated into French, German, and English (see Figure 1).

SIMPLE, ADVANCED & SYSTEMATIC SEARCH
There are three possible ways to interrogate the Klapp-Online. The simple search allows one to perform a search in any of the data fields contained within a bibliographic record: title, author, location, page numbers, classifications, subjects, and review notes. The advanced search is nothing more than three simple search boxes with neither the addition of new search fields nor search options. The systematic search option uses the Klapp’s subject classification system to browse through subject-headings and extract all bibliographic records associated with the selected heading. Once within a list of search results, the results can be further refined by Author or Topics. There is neither an option to consult search history nor to save a search history. Search results may also be reorganized by publication/copyright date or author by author surname.

YEARS 1956–1990
Because the searchable database only covers 1991 to the most recent database update, this section offers a PDF version of the print Klapp from 1956 to 1990. The PDFs can be downloaded individually and support in-text keyword searching.

OPENURL

Within the search results, it is possible to have an OpenURL integrated for searching local library holdings. The Find Full Text button appears uniquely within the selected record and not within the list of search results.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

The Klapp-Online allows for easy Zotero capture and export functionality to bibliographic management software such as EndNote and Refworks. The Klapp-Online also has a Favourites folder where collected references can later be exported to RIS format, MARC, and text formats. However, there are technical problems with the Favourites folder export feature when too many bibliographic records are added, causing the export feature to fail.

WORLDCAT & KARLSRUHE VIRTUAL CATALOGUE (KVK)

Even if a library has not set up its OpenURL with the Klapp-Online, a link to WorldCat is included in each bibliographic record by default. There is also a default link to the Karlsruher Virtueller Katalog, a collective catalogue of research libraries and consortia in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, as well as to various National Library catalogues.

Critical Evaluation

REPUTATION
The most important strength of the Klapp is its reputation among librarians and professors for being the premier and most comprehensive source for French literary criticism. This consensus is often reinforced through librarian-professor interactions and can be directly seen on Vittorio Klostermann’s website via the testimonial of Michael Nerlich, Professor of Romance Literatures at the Technical University of Berlin (Germany), “Everyone - students, lecturers - will find (almost) everything that has been published anywhere in the world on French literature - from La Vie de Saint Alexis through to the present day. And not only on literature from France, but also from Canada, Africa, Madagascar, America, Louisiana. Warmly recommended!”

GEOGRAPHY AND CONTENT
The geographic distribution of journal articles indexed in the Klapp could be perceived as a weakness due to its apparent Western bias; 78% of journals are European and 20% are North American. There is little to no content from the African continent. There is a lot of study on Francophone Africa between Europe and North America without necessarily including Africa in the scholarly exchange. Is it due to editorial policies omitting these journals, or could it be that African scholars left for Europe and North-America? Further studies are needed to answer these questions.
SEARCH INTERFACE
The interface is simple and easy to use compared to a lot of other modern databases. This can be considered as a strength and a weakness of the database. One can only search based on the title, author, or subjects/authors covered. Compare this to MLA or Lion or even the Bibliographie de la littérature française (BLF), and there are searchable metadata fields missing from the Klapp’s search interface such as journal title, publisher, place of publication, and many other searchable fields that are common in modern databases. Despite the search interface not being as advanced as ProQuest or EBSCOhost literary database, the content of the Klapp is its strength. The precision that Astrid Klapp-Lehrmann and her team go through provides librarians and scholars with undeniably one of the most powerful tools in French language literary criticism (see Figure 2).

YEARS 1956 TO 1991
As the online interface only allows for searching from 1991 to the most recent database update, the Klapp has retro-digitized years 1956 to 1990 in optical character recognition (OCR) PDFs. This is a noticeable advantage to having to physically search through 28 different printed volumes. This is quite beneficial in that it is an important time saver for scholars doing comprehensive research since the beginnings of the Klapp. The only small disadvantage to having to search the PDFs is that each PDF is nearly thirty megabytes in size. The large size of these PDF files is very disadvantageous to those who have slow internet connections. To make this database even more user-friendly, the Klapp is going to have to progressively add to the general searchable interface of Klapp-Online, years 1956 to 1990. This could save even more time for scholars and librarians performing comprehensive searches from 1956.

DATABASE UPDATE FREQUENCY
The biggest weakness of this database is the frequency at which new references are added. This only happens in January and February of every year in line with the publication of the physical version of the Bibliographie de la littérature française. For example, bibliographic references for 2016 were added to the Klapp-Online in February 2017. This can be problematic for librarians and researchers who desire the most recently published literary critique in their areas.

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT
The different sections of the systematic search can be very useful for those who are attempting to develop a weak area of their collection. For example, one wishing to retroactively develop in Medieval or Francophone literature can use the different systematic search options to retrieve all the bibliographic records of monographs, book reviews, conference proceedings, and journal articles on the specific literary subject (see Figure 3). This is also a big advantage to make sure that major works for a year have been added to a library’s collection.

Competitive Products
BIBLIOGRAPHIE DE LA LITTÉRATURE FRANÇAISE (BLF)
The Bibliographie de la littérature française (BLF) is the only other bibliography that specializes exclusively in French literary criticism.
and is the main competitor to the Klapp. The primary differences between the BLF and the Klapp are threefold: the BLF has rolling additions of new bibliographic records whereas the Klapp offers a unique update in January and February of every year; the BLF does not at all cover medieval French literary criticism; and the BLF offers a much more robust advanced search functionality that allows the user to limit results by monograph, book chapter, and journal.

MLA INTERNATIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

The MLA International Bibliography may also be considered a competitor but should be considered a complementary database as its coverage is broader and covers primarily English language literary criticism, while also covering other languages. Additionally, the MLA International Bibliography indexes entire journals, whereas the Klapp and BLF uniquely index individual articles on French literary criticism.

ÉRUDIT, PERSÉE, AND CAIRN

What vastly differentiates Érudit and CAIRN from the Klapp is their multidisciplinary content. For example, Érudit and Persée cover primarily francophone journals, thesis, proceedings, and books in the Humanities and Social Sciences from Québec (Érudit) and France (Persée), whereas CAIRN covers primarily francophone journals, encyclopedias, and magazines in the Humanities, Social Sciences, Law, and Public Health in France. All three are full-text resources a bit à la JSTOR, whereas the Klapp is neither multidisciplinary nor full text, rather uniquely a bibliographic database.

Purchase & Contract Provisions

The Klapp-Online provides direct access to its License Agreement via its website. The agreement is clear and concise. Students, employees, and guests may use the database for teaching, research, instruction, and continuing education as well as for personal use as long as the License Agreement is respected. The Agreement clearly features a provision that libraries may allow for public access of Klapp-Online via public work stations. Users may also make small printouts or electronic copies of bibliographic records.

Klapp-Online Review Scores Composite: ★★★★ 1/8

The maximum number of stars in each category is 5.

Content: ★★★★
Covers French language literary criticism from the middle ages to modern literature. However, must reconsider yearly database update frequency.

User Interface/Searchability: ★★★★
Very navigable and simple search interface. Lacks many basic and advanced search features found in common databases, but still very functional.

Pricing: ★★★★
Very competitive for being one the premier bibliographies in French literary criticism. Nevertheless, options based on FTE would be beneficial to institutions with smaller collections budgets.

Purchase/Contract Options: ★★★★ 1/2
Contract is simple and concise and clearly states that all university employees and students may have remote access, as well as guest library users may have in library access.

Free Text Keywords: French Literature | Francophone Literature | French Language Literature | Lettres françaises | Bibliographie disciplinaire | Literary Criticism | Critique littérarie | Bibliographie der französischen Literaturwissenschaft

Primary Category: Language and Literature
Secondary Categories: History & Area Studies; Humanities

Target Audience: Undergraduate (including community colleges); Graduate/Faculty/Researcher
Access: Subscription

Contact Information

Verlag Vittorio Klostermann
Vittorio Klostermann GmbH, Westerbachstraße 47
60489 Frankfurt am Main
Deutschland
Phone: +49 / 69 / 970816-0
E-mail: <verlag@klostermann.de>
Producer URL: <https://www.klostermann.de/>
Product URL: <http://klapp-online.de/start_klapp-online_fr.html>
Authentication
Klapp-Online user authentication is based on IP address, and proxy servers such as EZProxy, Shibboleth, and in-browser proxy configuration also function for authentication purposes. VPN is another way one can authenticate with Klapp-Online.

Author’s References

About the Author
Michael David Miller is the Librarian for French Literature, LGBTQ+ Studies, and Economics at McGill University’s Humanities and Social Sciences Library (Montréal, Québec). He holds a Master of Library and Information Sciences from the Université de Montréal, and two Bachelors of arts: one in French Studies, and one in Advertising, both from Michigan State University. In April 2016, he presented a poster on his preliminary research findings on the Bibliographie d’histoire littéraire française at the Concordia University Library Research Forum.

Subscribe to The Charleston Advisor Today!

The Charleston Advisor: Critical Reviews of Web Products for Information Professionals

✔ YES! Enter my Subscription for One Year.

Name: ____________________________
Title: ____________________________
Organization: _____________________
Address: __________________________
City/State/Zip: _____________________
Phone/Fax: ________________________
E-Mail: ____________________________

☐ YES. I am interested in being a Reviewer.

ORDER YOUR SUBSCRIPTION TODAY.

Order on the Web: www.charlestonco.com

Over 750 Reviews Now Included
■ Libraries pay less than $.60 per review
■ Publishers pay less than $1.00 per review

How Much Are You Spending?
■ Web Database and Quarterly Print are now available at the low price of $295.00 for libraries; $495.00 for all others.

6180 E. Warren Ave., Denver, CO 80222
Phone: (303) 282-9706   Fax: (303)282-9743