Ebony Magazine Archive

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Composite Score: ★ ★ ★ ★ 1/8

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Abstract

The Ebony Magazine Archive is a very important African-American cultural resource of images, news, entertainment, and much more between the years 1945-2014. It is a primary resource database geared toward academic research in the humanities, but other disciplines may also benefit from the rich content of the archive. Most specifically researchers in art, cultural studies, history, literature, mass media, music, business, and marketing would benefit from the photographs, cartoon/comic strips, advertisements, film reviews, and news reports. In addition, it provides essential images of key African American figures, businesses, and artists. The searching and search results interface lets the user explore by content type, Boolean/phrases, and SmartText searching among other filters. All content is available through PDF for great accessibility and convenience.

Pricing Options

Ebony Magazine Archive is a one-time purchase. Pricing is based on many factors including FTE (Full-Time Equivalent), existing subscriptions to other EBSCO databases, and consortium agreements and/or buying groups. Institutions should contact EBSCO for pricing specifics and a customized quotation. Using the Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library for an example, a one-time price quote for a magazine archive database was $13,000 and an additional 2% annual access fee of $260 was required. Existing EBSCO subscribers should contact their direct sales representative for institutional pricing.

Product Overview/Description

Ebony Magazine Archive is academically focused and is designed for those who are used to academic research. While *Ebony* is still an important African-American magazine now available online,

the general public and other users would not find the content in the archives applicable to their daily activities. Researchers who use this database will find an extensive catalog of issues between 1945-2014. At the current time, there are no recorded plans to add 2015-current editions to the archive.

In terms of content, the database is applicable to many academic fields. There are twenty-nine document types found within the archives. The rich gallery of photographs and advertisements featuring African Americans in each decade would be useful to any researcher in cultural studies, art, history, fashion, marketing, business, and mass media. Other content, such as television reviews, film reviews, book reviews, product views, obituaries, cartoon/comic strips, interviews, and news articles can be pertinent to other fields of study as well. Content of the archives is easily accessible with the PDF format of all items and also compatible with accessibility software such as JAWS and NVDA.

No particular technology requirements are needed except for a login account. It is up to the individual to gain access or for the institution to provide access to its users. The database is accessed through any web browser or through the mobile app.

User Interface/Navigation/Searching

USER INTERFACE

The user interface is not modernized in terms of the look of the search layout, menu layout, and setting options. If a user is not familiar with an EBSCO*host* database, the advanced search option

FIGURE 1   Ebony Magazine Archive User Interface with Basic Search Box
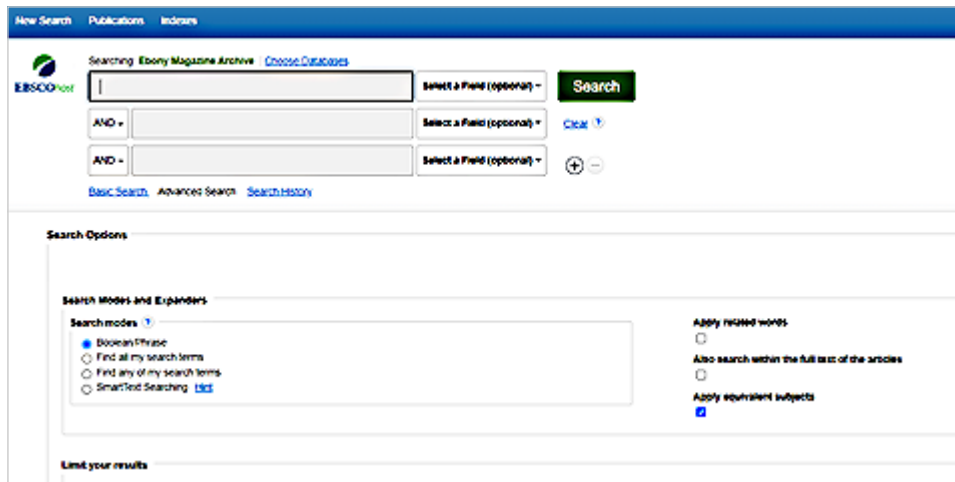
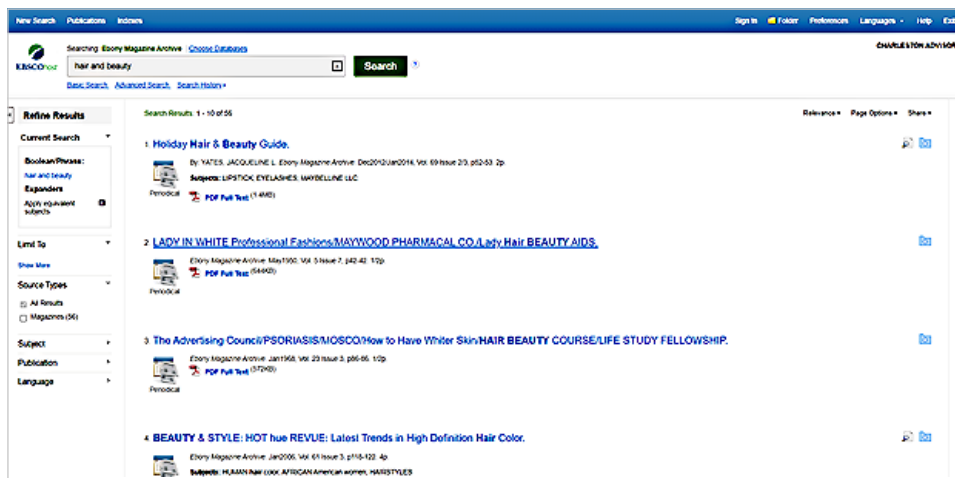**FIGURE 2   Ebony Magazine Archive Advanced Search Page**

FIGURE 3   Ebony Magazine Archive Search Results with Bolded Search Terms

may be missed underneath the simple search box. However, it can be said that the simplicity of the layout can guide users on how to navigate the database (see Figures 1 and 2).

NAVIGATION

Navigation of the Ebony Magazine Archives is similar to other EBSCO*host* databases, with the main user menu at the top of the page within a long blue bar and the search engine in the middle of the page with a plain white background. The user also has the option to change language in the upper right corner of the user menu, but all Ebony Magazine content is in English.

SEARCHING

A User can search using Boolean Operators and Phrases. The SmartText tool will display in bold the search terms in the title and subject headings. Searching for specific African American figures using their name will also yield great results (see Figure 3).

In terms of simplicity, searching by one of the twenty-nine document types in addition to search terms may yield the best results depending on the topic. Using the terms "hair AND beauty" yields majority images and advertisements for African American hairstyles (see Figure 4).

In addition, users are also able to save documents to a folder, share, and permalink. Other tools available in the database are

linking to Google Drive, Citation export, Citation generator, print, and note creation.
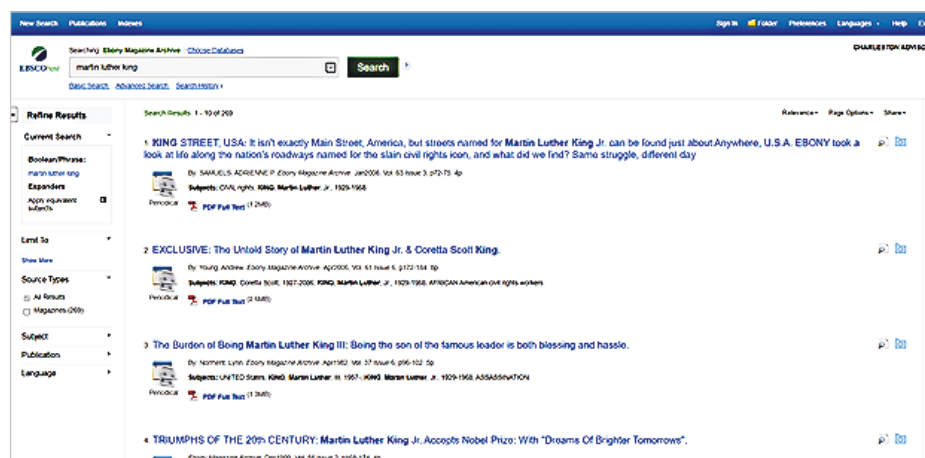
ACCESSIBILITY

According to the EBSCO accessibility product features, all EBSCO databases are compliant with JAWS and NVDA testing. Products also feature Text-to-Speech, Transcripts, Alternate Text, ARIA Landmarks, Keyboard Access, and EPUB & DRM-free e-books.

Critical Evaluation

Navigating the database is generally easy although not user friendly to first-time researchers. The research filter is clear and concise in what type of search (basic or advanced) a user can conduct. There is also a general help guidebook for users of EBSCO*host* platforms which concisely lay out technology requirements, citation styles, browsing setting, etc. In addition, the database also integrates SpringShare technology, LibChat, for librarians to communicate with researchers.

When expanding to the advanced search filter, the 29 categories for document type can help a user minimize their research time. The categories are: abstract, advertisement, article, book review, calendar, cartoon/comic strip, diary, editorial, establishment review, excerpt, exhibition review, festival review, film review, film/

television criticism, front cover, image, interview, letter to the editor, music review, obituary, performance review, poem, proceeding, product review, recipe, science experiment, table of contents, television review, and travel guide. Results can be further filtered by subject in relation to search terms and keywords. For example a search such as "Martin Luther King Jr." will also bring up related subjects such as "Rosa Parks."

A logged-in account will log out after a certain amount of time of inactivity. The user would have to simply log back in but will lose any search that was on the last page without saving. A user will also lose any items in a folder unless logged into a personal EBSCO account, which can sometimes confuse a user if they are using their institutional login.

Overall, Ebony Magazine Archive is a great resource for researchers of African American culture, fashion, civil rights, business, etc. While it does have some weaknesses such as lack of Smart-Text searching in the PDFs and user friendliness, it is a great online resource.

Competitive Products

Coming soon from EBSCO, the archives of the sister magazine to *Ebony* is *Jet*. Jet Magazine Archive covers art, news, politics and other social topics with an African-American focus. It includes over 3,100 issues providing a broad view of culture, fashion and entertainment from its first issue in 1951 through 2014 (<https://www.ebsco.com/products/magazine-archives/jet-magazine-archive>).

Essence is a magazine focused on Black Women. From fashion to technology, the magazine strives to bring forth the stories of Black Women in a positive light. Essence magazine archives are for subscription and purchased through multiple database platforms. The first issue was published in May 1970.

Since 1970, *Black Enterprise* has focused on business, entrepreneurship, financial advice, and other important figures of business in the Black Community. The first four decades of the magazine have been digitized by Google Books for free. For current issues, institutional subscriptions are available through various platforms (<https://books.google.com/books/about/Black_Enterprise.html?id=W2UEAAAAMBAJ>).

Founded in Baltimore, Maryland, *The Baltimore Afro-American* (The Afro, The Afro-American) is a historical newspaper database provides easy searchable first-hand accounts of the time

about the Black Community. The first issue was published in 1892. This database is hosted on the ProQuest platform (<https://about.proquest.com/en/products-services/histnews-bn/>).

Founded in Chicago, Illinois, *The Chicago-Defender* is a historical newspaper database provides essential information on the Black Community during Jim-Crow era violence. The first issue was published in 1905. This database is hosted on the ProQuest platform (<https://about.proquest.com/en/products-services/hist-news-bn/>).

Black World/Negro Digest is another publication from Johnson Publishing. An older magazine than *Ebony* and *Jet*, *Negro Digest* later renamed *Black World* is an important magazine that told news during the Civil Rights Movement. Two decades of the magazine has been digitized for free by Google Books.

Purchase & Contract Provisions

Since each institution would receive a personalized quote, purchase and contract provisions will be based on institutional agreements. Negotiations are strictly handled through the Subscription Services Division and the contact information can be found here: <https://www.ebsco.com/offices>.

Free Text Keywords: African American | African American Studies | African American Experience | African American Culture | Cultural Studies | History | African American History | African American Fashion | African American Art | Humanities

Primary Category: History & Area Studies

Secondary Categories: Art & Architecture; Ethnic, Gender, and LGBTQ Studies; History & Area Studies; Humanities; Multidisciplinary (or interdisciplinary); Music, Theater, Film Studies

Type of product being reviewed: Image database; Newspaper or news source; Ejournal collection; Primary source digital content; Publisher or Organization content/repository

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

Access: One-time purchase

Ebony Magazine Archive
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The maximum number of stars in each category is 5.

Content: ★★★★ 1/2

The content of the Ebony Magazine Archives is irreplaceable for African American Studies. There are important images of African American figures that cannot be found anywhere else. In addition, the magazine also depicts African Americans from all social classes in a positive light. The available PDFs of the content also helps it reach a wide number of users.

User Interface/Searchability: ★★★★

Like other EBSCO Host databases, the user interface could use an upgrade to look more modern. The standard interface is reminiscent of the early 2000s webpages. However, the easy searchability of the database easily makes up for the look.

Pricing: ★★★★

Because the database is a one-time purchase, this could help considerably smaller libraries and academic institutions. Considering the available authentication options and personalized price negotiations, there is a significant savings opportunity.

Purchase/Contract Options: ★★★★

Each institution will have to negotiate with a sales representative for the personalized quote but there are noteworthy purchase/contract options if the institution is currently subscribed to other EBSCO*host* databases.

Authentication

Through EBSCO's platform, Ebony Magazine Archive offers a variety of sign-in options. According to the EBSCO Connect Administrative Tools page, all EBSCO platform databases support the following: IP address authentication with a proxy tool, SAML Single Sign-On (SSO) authentication including but not limited to OpenAthens, InCommon, CARSI, and UK Access Management federation, Google Sign-in including Google Workspace and CASA authentication, Guess Access, Patron ID authentication, and many other forms of authentication. On the EBSCO landing page to login there is also a notice to patrons about remote access options: "Remote access to EBSCO's databases is permitted to patrons of subscribing institutions accessing from remote locations for personal, non-commercial use. However, remote access to EBSCO's databases from non-subscribing institutions is not allowed if the purpose of the use is for commercial gain through cost reduction or avoidance for a non-subscribing institution."

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About the Author

Patrice Jane Williams is the Humanities Librarian at the Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library, located in the heart of Atlanta. Patrice serves as the subject liaison for English, Music, African American, Africana, and African Diaspora Studies. She has a master's degree in Library & Information Science and a B.A. of English from Valdosta State University. ■

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