World Building for the Real World Resources

Compiled by Bill Cameron

This list is by no means comprehensive. Most of these resources have a U.S.-focus, though analogs for many places world-wide are available.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps

https://www.loc.gov/collections/sanborn-maps/

University, college, and local libraries often a collection of these, some in print and many digital.

Interpreting Sanborn Maps

http://www.historicalinfo.com/fimo-interpret-sanborn-maps/

If you want to get really granular, this article does a deep dive into how to read Sanborn maps.

Special Collections

College and university special collections are often available to the public even if you aren't affiliated. Check with your local institutions for access.

Local and regional historical societies usually have libraries and reading rooms. Some are open to the public, some available by appointment. Check with societies and museums in areas of interest for access.

The Oregon State University Libraries Special Collections & Archives Research Center

http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu

The Oregon State University library special collections library has a large collection of maps and other sources available to view by appointment.

University of Oregon USGS TopoView

https://ngmdb.usgs.gov/topoview/

U.S. topographical and geologic maps (in addition to other data types), both contemporary and historical for U.S. states and territories.

Social Security Administration list of most popular names

https://www.ssa.gov/oact/babynames/

See lists for specific years, or by decade going back to the 1880s. Fun character naming resource.

Inflation Calculator

https://www.officialdata.org/countries

Provides a general indicator of the value of money over time in more than two dozen currencies. In different eras and countries, goods will have different values in relation to each other, which may or may not track with the overall value of money.

Breakfast the Year You Were Born

https://www.thedailymeal.com/eat/breakfast-price-year-you-were-born-gallery

This long gallery starting in 1937 is U.S.-based, but a great way to see value in context over time.

A search online will bring up a number of similar sites, some as narrowly focused as the cost of a cup of coffee over time to broad overviews of the price of consumer goods and services.

Gold Prices Over Time

https://www.macrotrends.net/1333/historical-gold-prices-100-vear-chart

This website has a wide range of historical price data you can search.

5 Steps to Getting Rights to Lyrics

(Anne R. Allen and Michael Murphy)

https://annerallen.com/2013/03/so-you-want-to-use-song-lyrics-in-your/

Practical guide to getting necessary permissions.

Further Reading

Worldbuilding: Crime and Fantasy Books Have More in Common Than You Might Think (Kelly Braffet)

https://crimereads.com/worldbuilding-crime-and-fantasy-books-have-more-in-common-than-vou-might-think/

The Five P's of World Building

(Jaye Wells)

https://jayewells.substack.com/p/the-five-ps-of-world-building

Jaye offers a lot of great writing insights through her website. This link a great place to start.

Grounds for Murder: Maps and Floor Plans in Mystery Novels

(Kristel Autencio)

https://bookriot.com/2015/09/28/grounds-for-murder-maps-and-floor-plans-in-mystery-novels/

Using Real People, Places, and Corporations in Your Fiction: How Real Can You Get and Not Be Sued? (Matt Knight)

https://www.sidebarsaturdays.com/2017/08/05/httpwp-mep7vddb-us/

Practical overview of the legal issues surrounding the use of the really real.

Could I Be Liable for Libel in Fiction? (from the Rights of Writers blog by Mark Fowler) http://www.rightsofwriters.com/2010/12/could-i-be-liable-for-libel-in-fiction.html

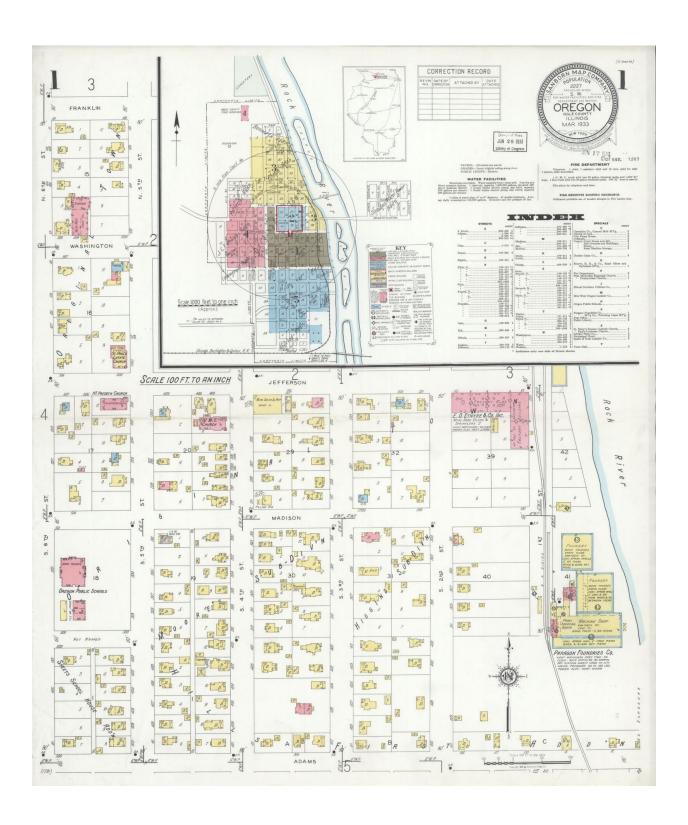
Blake Morrison on the cost of quoting lyrics

https://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/may/01/blake-morrison-lyrics-copyright Insight into what it might take to use song lyrics in your title. (You'll have to convert from British Pounds.)

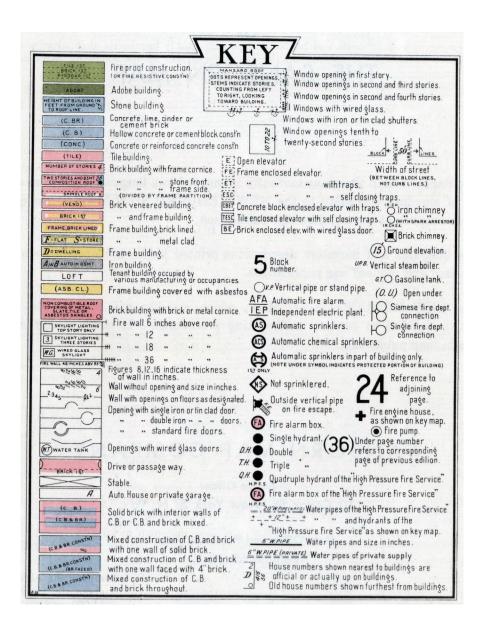
The Public Domain Review: Guide to Finding Public Domain Works Online

https://publicdomainreview.org/guide-to-finding-interesting-public-domain-works-online/Looking for something to quote that you won't have to pay an arm and a leg for? This is a great rabbit hole to fall into.

The 1933 Sanborn Map of Oregon, Illinois.



Sanborn Map Interpretive Key



https://twitter.com/deryncollier http://deryncollier.com



Deryn Collier @deryncollier · 38m Speaking of which, there's always the fudge factor in research for historical fiction. For example:











Deryn Collier @deryncollier · 38m My WIP is set in Montreal in the spring of 1947. My research on taxis of that era tells me that taxis did not have radio dispatch until later in the summer of 1947.





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Deryn Collier @deryncollier · 38m

But I need my fictional taxis to have fictional dispatch in order for my story to hang together. And so, my taxis will have radios *snap* the magic of fiction.

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About W.H./Bill Cameron

When not tending his chickens, *Crossroad* author W.H. Cameron shapes unruly words into captivating people caught in harrowing situations. As Bill Cameron he writes the critically-acclaimed Skin Kadash mysteries, and his YA mystery *Property of the State* was named one of *Kirkus Reviews* Best of 2016. His stories have appeared in *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*, *A Beast Without a Name*, Lee Child's *First Thrills*, and more.

Bibliography

Writing as W.H. Cameron

Crossroad

"Hey Nineteen" in A Beast Without a Name (anthology)

"Christmas Spirit" coming in Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine

Writing as Bill Cameron

Property of the State County Line Day One Chasing Smoke Lost Dog

Puppy Love Noir (short story collection)

Diaries of Misspent Youth (short story collection)

"The Princess of Felony Flats" in *First Thrills* (anthology)

"Heat Death" in Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine

"Slice of Pie" in Killer Year (anthology)

"Coffee, Black" in *Portland Noir* (anthology)

"Sunlight Nocturne" in *Deadly Treats* (anthology)

"The Last Ship" in West Coast Crime Wave (anthology)

"A Tall House" in Lost Children 2: Protectors (anthology)

"Daisy and the Desperado" in *Murder at the Beach* (anthology)

Learn more at www.bill-cameron.com.

Check out the *Crossroad* map collection here:

www.bill-cameron.com/novels/crossroad/crossroad-maps/