How Does "Oriental Cairo" Compare With Similar Works?*

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Abstract

"How Does "Oriental Cairo" Compare With Similar Works?" examines how to view a work in relation to similar works from other regions or periods, using an example "Oriental Cairo," which is included in the online Travelers in the Middle East Archive (TIMEA). This module is designed to guide you through the process of collecting a list of works dealing with the city of Cairo. We arrange the works regionally and chronologically to demonstrate how they can be used comparatively in a research project. This is part four of a nine-part course that uses Sladen's work for a case study on performing historical research.

Introduction

How can we understand a work and an author from another historical period? In previous modules that are part of the course on Douglas Sladen and Oriental Cairo: City of the Arabian Nights[1] , we have constructed a biography of Sladen[2] and a bibliography[3] of his works. Now we will investigate how to view Oriental Cairo: City of the Arabian Nights[4] , an early twentieth-century travel book included in the Travelers in the Middle East Archive (TIMEA)[5] , in the context of other works. We may assume that Douglas Sladen is not the first or last person to write about the city of Cairo. One way of assessing a work of literature is to compare it with similar works. In this way we can see the differences between two works written around the same time, published in the same region about the same subject. We can also track trends in writing about a subject over time by comparing consecutive works written about the same subject. Also, we might notice some differences between works published in different regions that reflect different regional perspectives. In this module we will build a list of works to which we can compare *Oriental Cairo* by using Library of Congress Subject Headings and WorldCat.

Collecting a Bibliography

As we accumulate our list of books, you should make notes with at least the minimum amount of information required to locate a copy of each work. However, you may also wish to include as much descriptive information as possible about each work we find, producing a browsable list of abstracted topics as well as titles for future reference.

The following example, drawn from the catalog record for *Oriental Cairo*, should clarify what we mean:

*Version 1.4: Oct 13, 2006 5:48 am -0500
†http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/
[1]http://hdl.handle.net/1911/9189
[2]"Researching Biography: Who is Douglas Sladen?" <http://cnx.org/content/m12529/latest/>
[3]"Compiling a Bibliography: What else has Douglas Sladen written?" <http://cnx.org/content/m12586/latest/>
[4]http://hdl.handle.net/1911/9189
[5]http://timea.rice.edu

Sladen, Douglas Brooke Wheelton, 1856-1947.
Oriental Cairo, the city of the "Arabian nights",

Illustrated with sixty-three intimate pictures of life in oriental Cairo, from photographs by the author, and with the newest map of Cairo.

London,Hurst & Blackett, 1911.

Cairo (Egypt)--Description and travel.
Egypt--Description and travel.

DT143 .S4

Figure 1: Research record for *Oriental Cairo*

The most practical resource for this practice will be explored in the section below on The Library of Congress.

1 The Library of Congress

The Library of Congress is the source of the system of categorization used by most of the libraries in the United States. We will be using their online catalog to lay out the parameters of our genre and to collect information on the works contained within it.

Accessing the Catalog of the Library of Congress

Visit http://catalog.loc.gov/[6] to access the Library of Congress catalog. From this page we can begin to assemble our bibliography.

Collecting Entries from the Database at the Library of Congress

Let's take a look at the types of information provided by the Library of Congress about their works, beginning with Oriental Cairo. Select the Basic Search option to the left of the screen. Enter "Oriental Cairo" into the text box provided and select begin search.

[6] http://catalog.loc.gov/

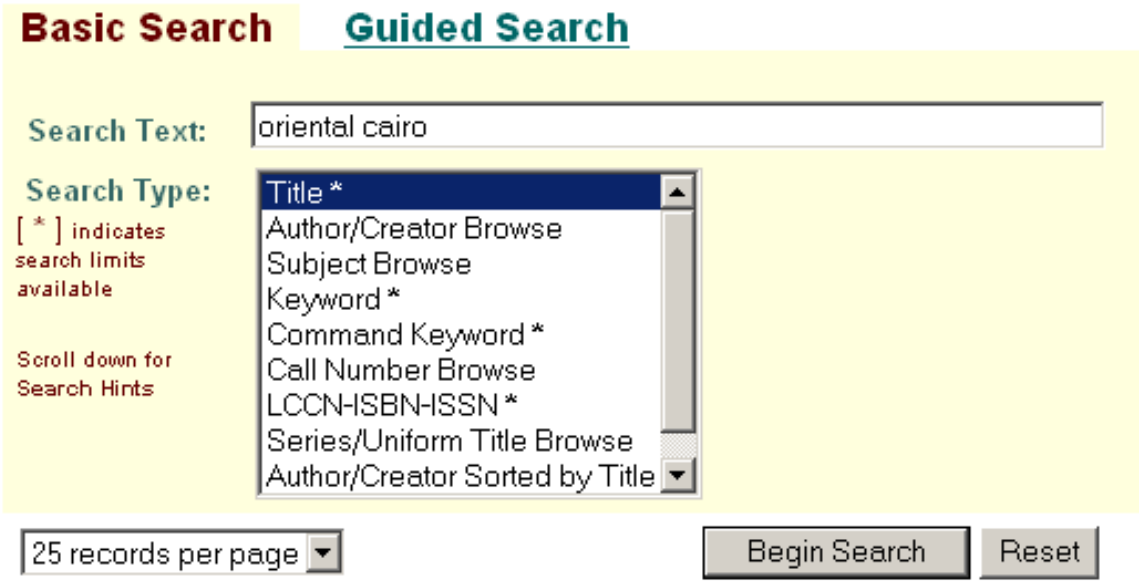

Figure 2: Basic Title Search

We receive a brief record at this point. Just to make sure we have all of the information we need, select the Full Record option among the tabs above the entry.

Figure 3: Full Record

Scroll to the bottom of the page and you will notice a Print or Save option.

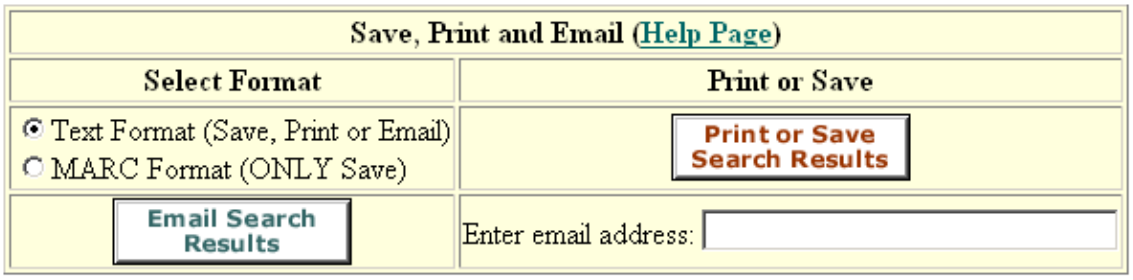

Figure 4

By selecting the Print or Save option you will be provided with a text only version of the information on "Oriental Cairo." You can now copy and paste this information into a document or download the web page for future use. Alternatively, you can email the search results to yourself. You should organize the information in a way that serves your research interests best, but take care not to eliminate any valuable information. As you add to your bibliography, do so alphabetically by author to save time in searching the lists later.

Subject Headings of the Library of Congress

You will notice a heading for Subjects in the Library of Congress description of Oriental Cairo. The Library of Congress Subject Headings are categories in a system for grouping books with similar topics. Subject headings are those words assigned to books that describe what the book is about. You can use the Library of Congress Subject Headings to help choose appropriate words or subject headings for Keyword searches in library catalogs. You can consult a print guide to Library of Congress subject headings or visit the online guide to subject headings[7] . The headings are broken down like this:

Sports

(May Subd Geog)

UF Field sports

Pastimes

Recreations

BT Recreation

RT Athletics

Games

Outdoor life

SA subdivision Sports under military services, e.g., United States. Army –Sports; and under ethnic groups

NT Aeronautical sports

Age and sports

Aquatic sports

Ball games

[etc...]

Here is a translation of the abbreviations:

[7] http://authorities.loc.gov/

"May Subd Geog" (next to the word "Sports") stands for "may be subdivided geographically." In other words, it might be possible to search specifically for aquatic sports in California, for example. This subject search could be done in the Catalog by keying in the terms "aquatic sports California."

UF stands for "Used For." This means that the subject heading "sports" is used to find information on "field sports," "past times," and "recreations" as well as "sports."

BT stands for "Broader Terms." In the example above, "BT Recreation" signifies that the term "recreation" can be used in a subject search if the term "sports" is too specific for your needs. The broader term "recreation" is more *general* than the term "sports."

RT stands for "Related Terms." These terms are neither broader or narrower than the term "sports," but may be used to find more material related to sports.

SA stands for "See Also." This reference gives hints for finding information related to your topic within other subject headings.

NT stands for "Narrower Terms." These are subject search terms that can be used to find material on more specific topics, or sub-topics of the subject "sports."

- Other terms can be tagged on to the subject headings to narrow your subject search. These terms are preceded by dashed lines (--) in LCSH. For example, under

Figure 5: University of Maryland Library. "Using Library of Congress Subject Headings." December 10, 2004. http://www.lib.umd.edu/UES/lcsh.html[8]

You can see how each main heading is composed of many subheadings and related terms. For *Oriental Cairo* we find two subject headings: "Cairo (Egypt) – Description and travel. " and "Egypt – Description and travel."

Note the structure of the heading: first the region that the work focuses on is listed, followed by its main subject, "description and travel." We might expect that the first heading, with its narrower focus on Cairo rather than the whole of Egypt, would provide fewer, more focused results. The next step is to narrow this list down to a manageable and productive collection of comparable works. As you will see, the ways we choose to narrow this list are themselves historical questions that might form the basis of new research projects.

1.1 How to Collect a Productive Bibliography from the Library of Congress Subject Headings

Begin with a Question

Organizing a productive list of works to compare with "Oriental Cairo" from the thousands of works out there requires that you come up with the appropriate criteria for differentiating the works. This depends entirely on your research needs. However, often the course of your research will change as you encounter new information about your topic. This is an excellent point in the project to open your research up to several different possibilities and take the road that seems most productive to you in terms of what you find. The "right" questions are only truly "right" in the sense that they yield productive results. The most productive questions ever asked by historians probably started out as part of a list of potentially productive directions.

[8] http://www.lib.umd.edu/UES/lcsh.html

How does "Oriental Cairo" compare with other works published around the same time by other people from Great Britain?

How does it compare with works published around the same time from another region, say Egypt or the United States?

How do the perspectives of women and men writing about Cairo in the first quarter of the twentieth century differ from one another?

How has writing about Cairo changed over time?

With these questions in mind, we will demonstrate the process of building a list of works with which to compare your central text.

Collecting the Titles that Share a Common Subject Heading

We will build our list by using the Library of Congress by Subject Heading. Since the Library of Congress catalog lists only its own holdings, we will use WorldCat to do our research. WorldCat also uses the Library of Congress Subject Headings, but it searches the holdings of libraries all over the world. For a brief tutorial on WorldCat, visit our WorldCat module. Here, we will be taking the information we gathered at the Library of Congress and performing an Advanced Search to produce lists that meet our research needs. You can use either the full version of WorldCat[9] , which many libraries subscribe to, or WorldCat.org[10] , which is free but has more limited features. Below we demonstrate the full version.

Once you have arrived at the WorldCat homepage, select the Advanced Search option. Enter the Subject Heading information into the text box exactly as it appeared in the Library of Congress result. Then use the pulldown menu and select the word Subject. It should then appear in the box instead of Keyword.

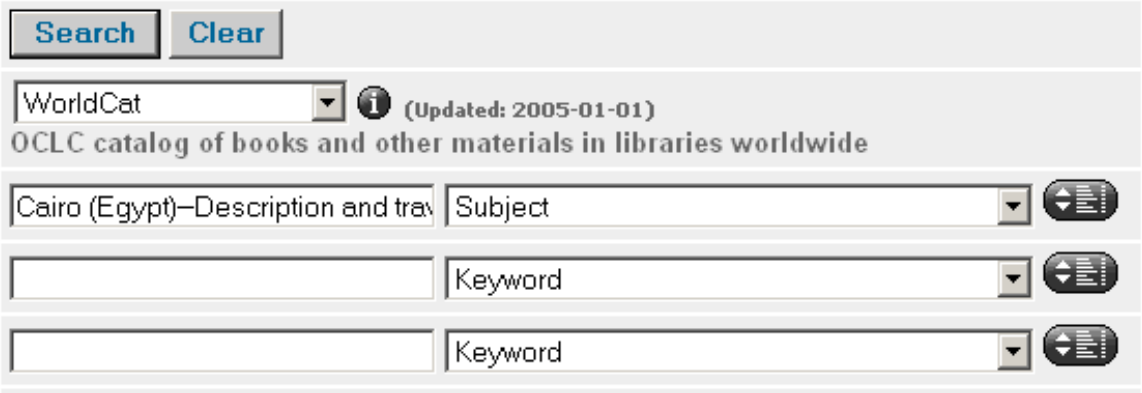

Figure 6: Doing a subject search in WorldCat

Select Search and you will be provided with everything WorldCat has categorized under the Subject Heading: "Cairo (Egypt)–Description and travel." "Oriental Cairo" appears as the fifteenth result out of one hundred and fifty-six books. Now we will narrow this list down based on how we wish to compare them to "Oriental Cairo". The following sections are headed by some of the research questions listed above. We will use WorldCat's Advanced Search features to explore related resources according to criteria such as publication place and date.

How does "Oriental Cairo" compare with similar works published around the same time by other people from Great Britain?

For this list we will need to locate works published from England within five years of "Oriental Cairo." Return to the WorldCat Advanced Search page and re-enter the Subject Heading information in to the first

[9] http://www.oclc.org/worldcat/
[10] http://worldcat.org/

text box as we did above.

Next, in the second text box type the word London, a major publishing hub in Britain. Then use the pulldown menu to select Publisher Location.

In the box labeled Year, type the year that fell five years before the publication of "Oriental Cairo" in 1911 and that year that fell five years after it with a dash in between them. Your entry should look like this:

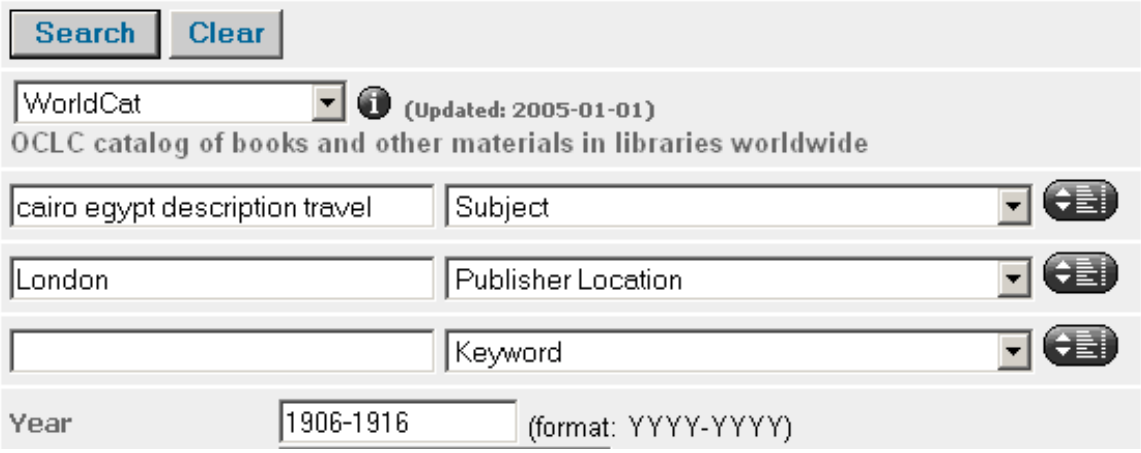

Figure 7: Searching WorldCat for Related Works Published in London

Select Search and you will find three titles that seem to fit our criteria for comparing "Oriental Cairo" to the works of Douglas Sladen's British contemporaries: Walter Tyndale's *Below the cataracts* (1907), A.O. Lamplough and R. Francis's *Cairo and its environs* (1909), and John Patrick Barry's *At the gates of the East* (1906).

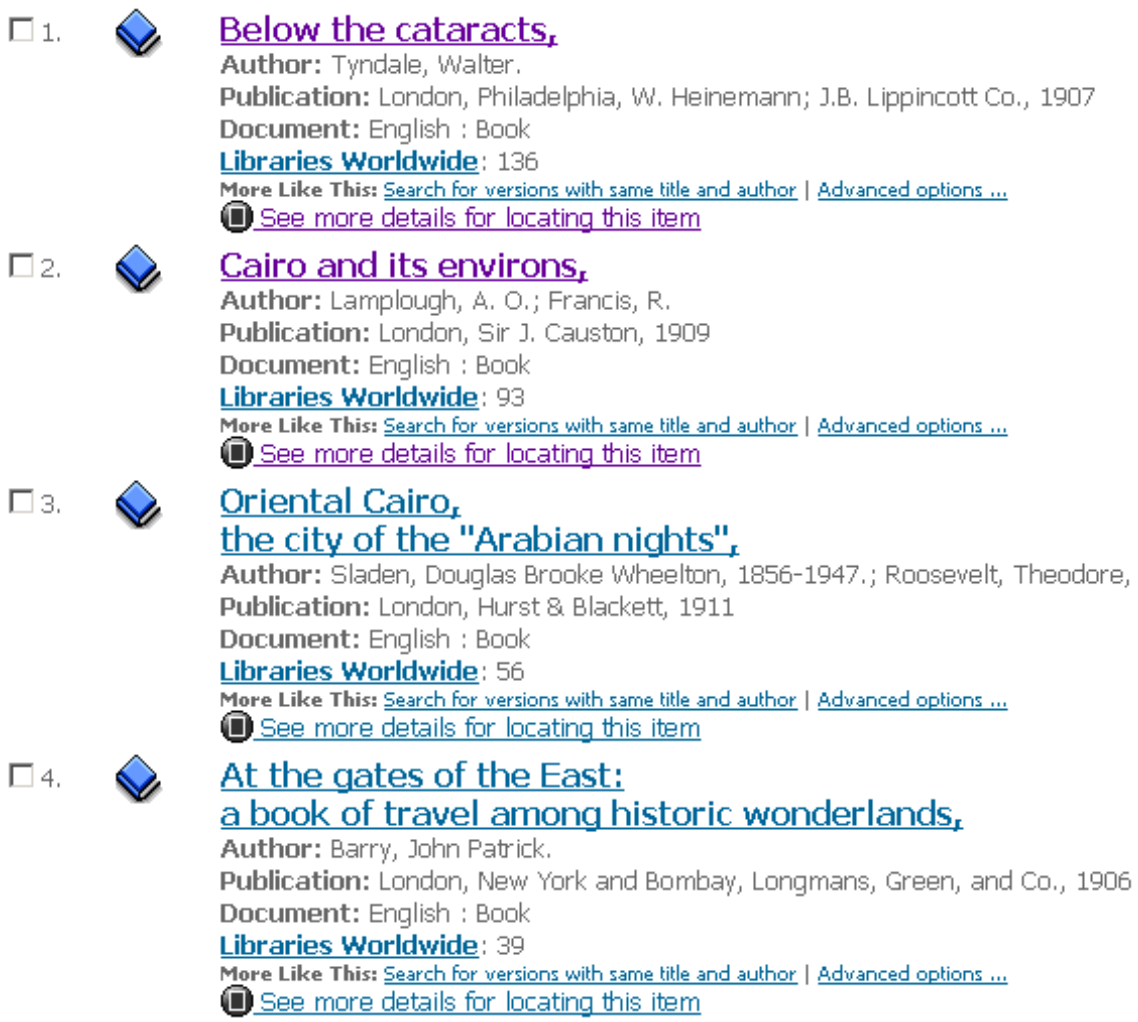

Figure 8: WorldCat Results

If your library does not have these works and you would like to examine them, you can request that the library borrow them through Interlibrary Loan. Note that the WorldCat record typically provides a link to Interlibrary Loan for your library to make it easy to borrow works you've found.

How does "Oriental Cairo" compare with works published from another region, say the United States for example?

For this list we will return to the Advanced Search page and reenter our Subject Heading information. Since we can only search the publication place by city, we should now enter a few publishing hubs from the United States, namely Boston, New York and Philadelphia. Make sure you separate the names of the cities with the word "or" so that the search engine will not offer you entries that include all three instead of one or the others. Your entry should look like this:

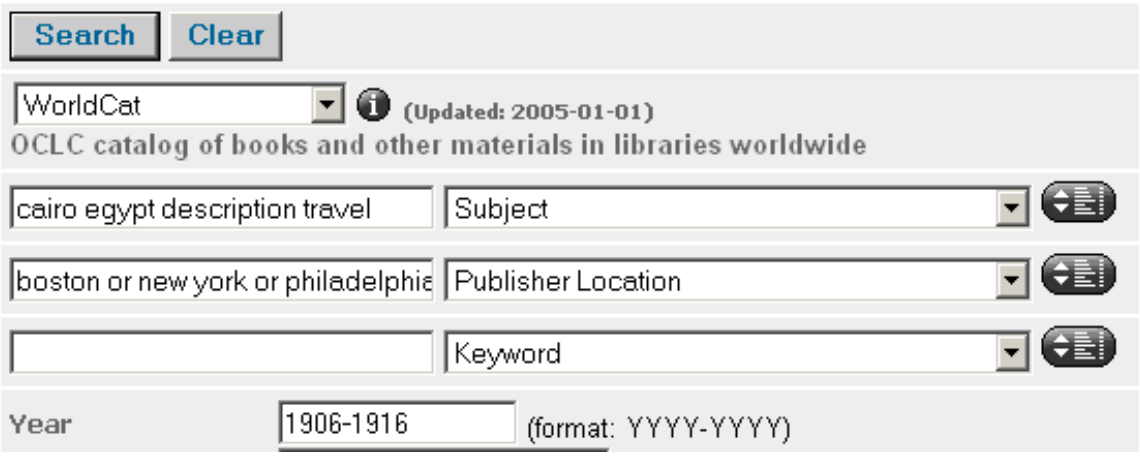

Figure 9: Searching WorldCat for US works

Notice that in the third entry from the top both London and Philadelphia are listed as cities of publication.

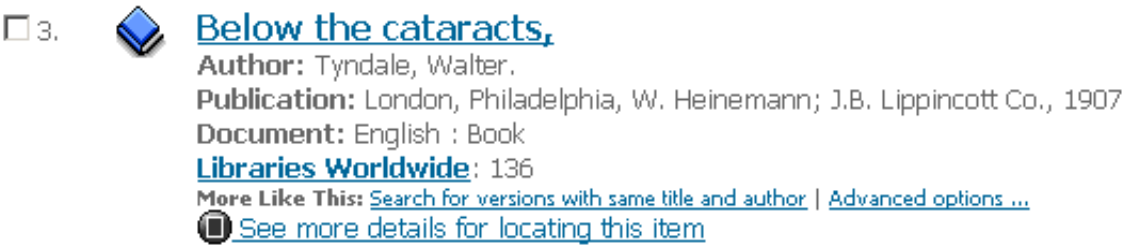

Figure 10: WorldCat Result: Work published in the US and Great Britain

Some books, particularly popular ones, were published both in the United States and Great Britain. In order to determine where the author is from, we may need to do some additional research.

You now have two lists of works published in different regions all having to do with traveling and describing the city of Cairo.

How has writing about Cairo changed over time?

For this list we shall not limit our search by date so that we might get the widest range of publication dates possible. In order to keep our list manageable we will limit our search by region once again, continuing with the publications coming out of London. Return to the Advanced Search screen and re-enter the subject headings and publisher location information into the text boxes. Do not, however, enter anything into the date text box. Your entry should look like this:

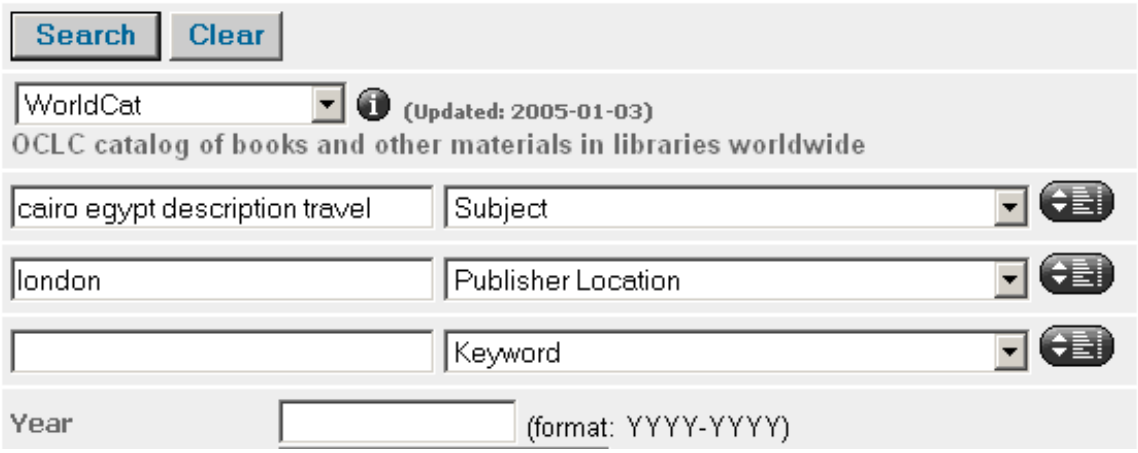

Figure 11: Searching WorldCat for works on Cairo from different periods

Your search should produce around thirty or so results from the first half of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the twenty-first.

To put them in order by date select the Sort option at the upper left hand of the screen.

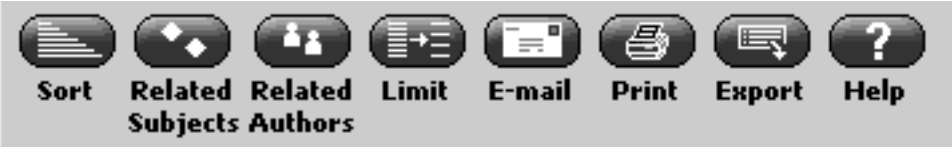

Figure 12: Sort by Date

You will have several sorting options. Use the arrow next to the text box to scroll down to the Date option and then select the Ascending option to the right of that box to move from earliest to latest dates.

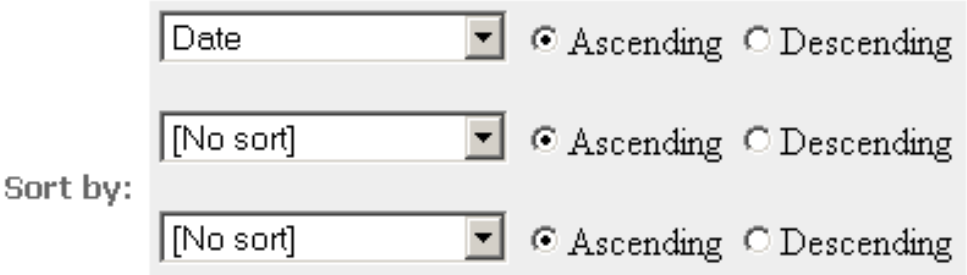

Figure 13

When you return to your results, the entries should be arranged in order from the earliest publication to

the latest. From this list you may select the works that seem most appropriate, in relatively even increments of years from the beginning of your designated period to the end.