

Shipping containers changed the world?

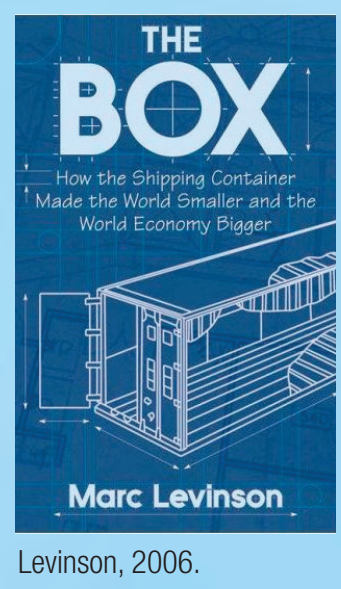
Bibliographic essay by John Tomlinson • LIS 652-2 spring 2010/Debbie Rabina • <http://mysite.pratt.edu/~jtomlins/652/>

My search

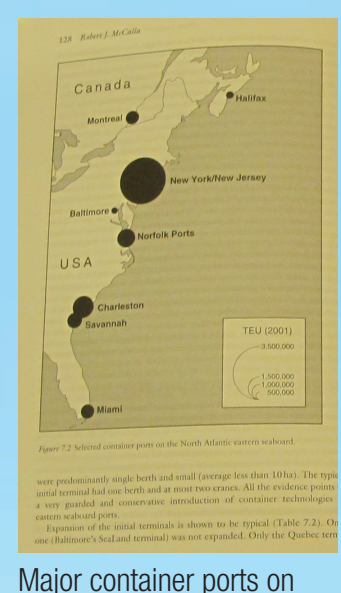
Intermodal shipping containers – the large boxes used to transport goods by ship, train and truck – have dramatically lowered costs of shipping since their widespread use began in the 1960s. This increased world trade and shifted patterns of production and consumption. Some observers believe economic globalization would not be possible without the container (Levinson, 2006).

What sources can we use to learn about the history and effects of containerization?

Books on containers, containerization, ports & shipping



Containers are a large enough topic that a number of books have been written about them specifically: on their history, popularization, and impact on shipping, shipping companies, dockside labor and world trade.



Books about ports and shipping also often address the impact of containerization.

A good library catalog, such as that of the New York Public Library, is invaluable for finding these. The bibliographies of these sources can, in turn, help us find additional material.

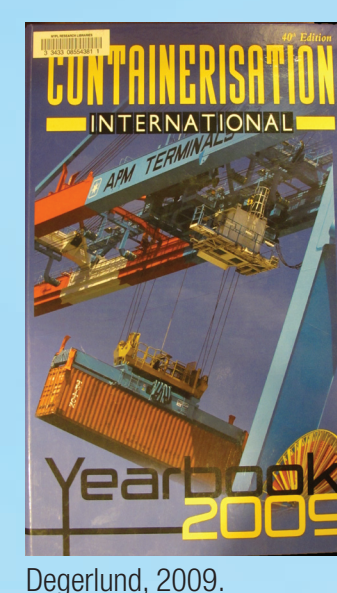
Other periodicals & articles

Indices can help us find articles about containers in both scholarly journals, such as *Business History Review* and *Logistics Information Management*, and also more and more popular publications, such as *The Economist* and *The New York Times*.

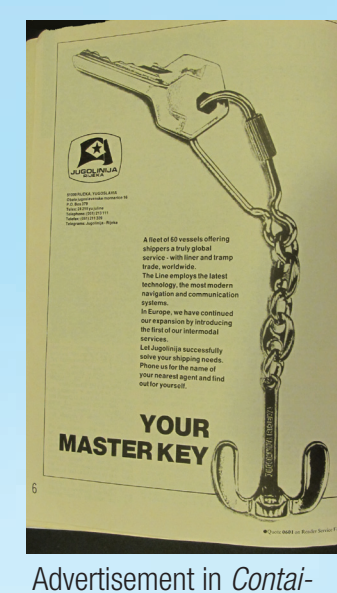


Some major indices, such as from Wilson and ProQuest, even have subject headings specific to our topic. Some recent articles look beyond containers' role in shipping to issues such as containers as a vector for terrorism and crime, the environmental impact of large container facilities, and containers as housing.

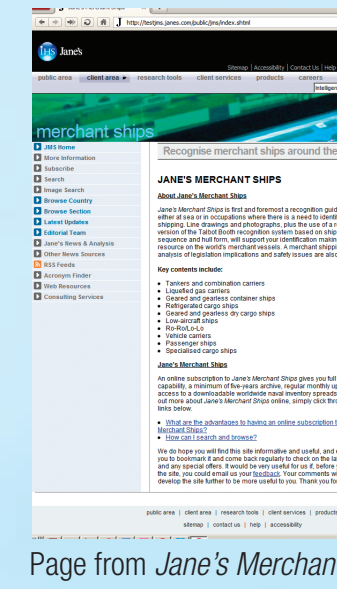
Trade journals, yearbooks & directories



As container use became widespread, trade magazines and other publications about the industry developed. Among them is *Containerisation International*, which has been published since the 1960s. Its publisher also produces a yearbook, containing articles, statistics, and a directory of ports, suppliers, consultants and other vendors. The advertisements in these publications are also informative.

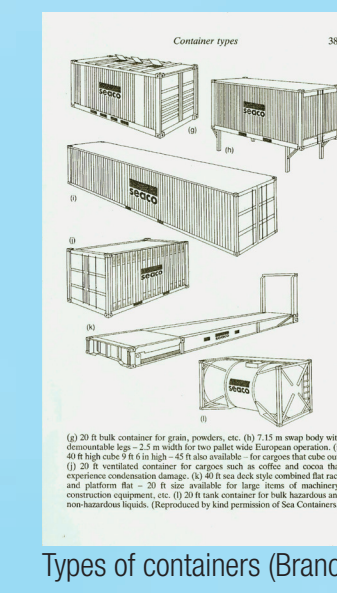


The defense and transportation publisher Jane's produces *Jane's containerisation directory*, which is similar to the *Containerisation International Yearbook*, as well as *Jane's Merchant Ships*. And as with *Containerisation International*, extensive information is available by subscription at the publisher's website.



Handbooks, training material & more

Through searching the internet and browsing a library catalog, we can find other useful material. One example is *Elements of shipping* (Branch, 1996), a handbook which contains a chapter on containers. A more recent example is the *Container handbook: Cargo loss prevention information* put out online and, in more detail, in print by German Marine Insurers.



Theses and conference proceedings, which are also sometimes found via indices, are another source of information. An example of the latter is the 1981 *Container Repair & Refurbishment Conference* in Amsterdam.

Conclusion

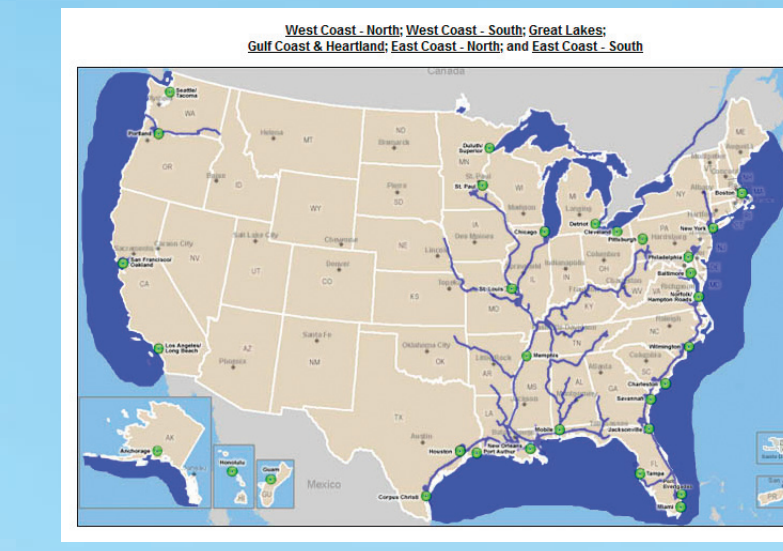
Although containers themselves are relatively simply objects, their huge economic, and also social and political, impact is reflected in the diverse publications about them and the variety of directions one could take in looking for information.

Encyclopedias

The Encyclopædia Britannica offers a little information for “container ship” and “containerization,” while Wikipedia offers a great deal on “containerization” and “intermodal container.” The references in Wikipedia can also serve as a basis for further exploration.

Government & geographic sources

The U.S. Department of Transportation and some of its constituent agencies publish information specifically about containers, including articles, maps and statistics. Census information can also be used to learn about the changes in labor and business over time.



U.S. Maritime Administration's Marine highways map.

Tools such as www.usa.gov and Google's government search service can help us find these and information from other agencies, ranging from articles on the use of containers as office space to plans for development of ports.

Sources in this poster

- Branch, A. (1996). *Elements of shipping, 7th edition*. London: Chapman & Hall. *Containerisation International* 24(11) (November 1990).
- Degerlund, J. (2009) *Containerisation international yearbook 2009*. London: Informa.
- Encyclopaedia Britannica Online.
- Finlay, P. & Thomas, R. (Eds.). (1981). *Proceedings of the Container Repair & Refurbishment Conference*. Amsterdam: Cargo Systems International.
- Gesamverband der Deutschen Versicherungswirtschaft. (2010) *Container handbook: Cargo loss prevention information from German marine insurers*. Berlin. Retrieved from http://www.containerhandbuch.de/chb_e/index.html
- Greenman, D. (2006). *Jane's merchant ships 2006-2007*. Surrey, UK: Jane's.
- Harris, P. (1994). *Jane's containerisation directory 1994-1995*. Surrey, UK: Jane's. Jane's website. <http://www.janes.com>.
- Levinson, M. (2006). *The box: How the shipping container made the world smaller and the world economy bigger*. Princeton: Princeton UP.
- Martin, A. (2009, January 31). Shipping container as building block. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/01/business/01newreal.html>
- McCalla, R.J. (2004). From 'anyport' to 'superterminal': Conceptual perspectives on containerization and port Infrastructures." In Pinder, D. & Slack, B. (Eds.) *Shipping and ports in the twenty-first century: Globalization, technical change and the environment* (pp. 125-142). London: Routledge.
- U.S. Maritime Administration. (n.d.) *Marine highways map*. Retrieved from http://www.marad.dot.gov/ships_shipping_landing_page/mhi_home/mhp_map/mhp_map.htm
- Wikipedia.

Image from photograph by Qinghua Li

