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## Las Vegas and water in the West: A digital collection perspective

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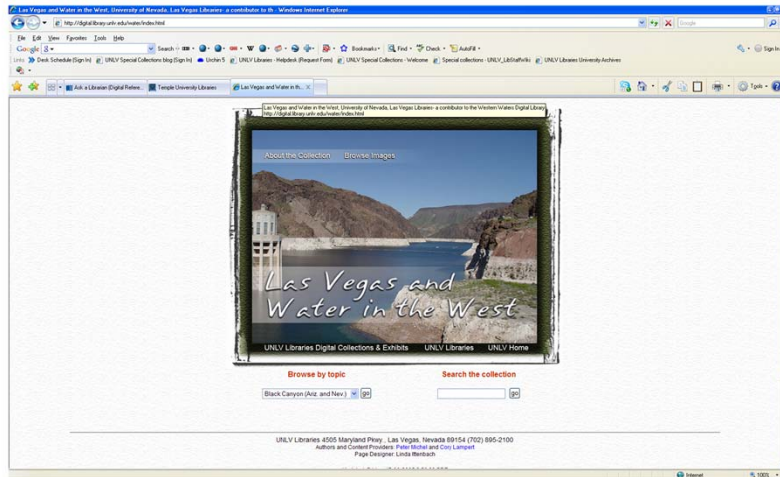
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# Las Vegas and Water in the West: A Digital Collection Perspective

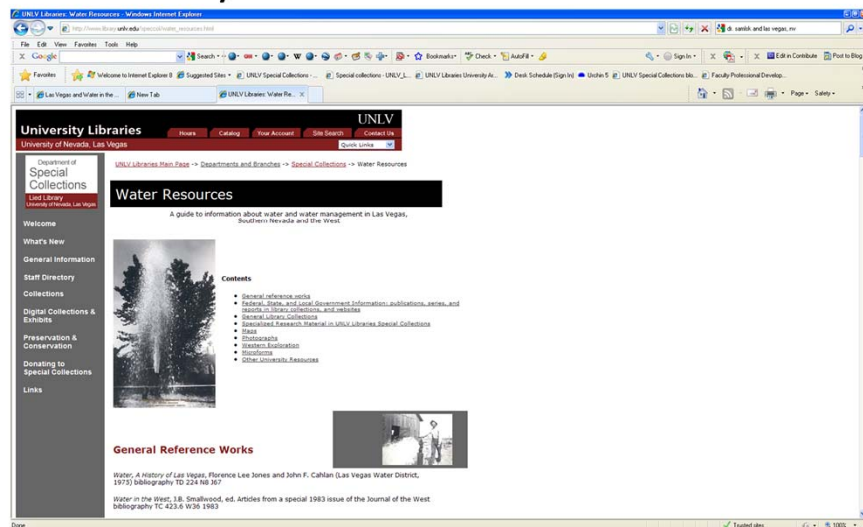
Presented at the Conference of Inter-Mountain Archivists Conference (CIMA), Provo, UT, May 2009.



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Water has always been a part of Las Vegas history. From the early days to today water has been instrumental in the growth of not only Las Vegas, but the Southwest. The Colorado River and the Hoover Dam in particular have provided the ability to create not only drinking water but electricity for a region that desperately needed then and now. Today, Las Vegas is a thriving metropolis, but not without its water issues. Currently, there is talk of tapping into a water table located over a hundred miles from the city. This could be a source that would complement the lowering water amount from the Colorado River. It's as if the water issues have not changed since the since the early part of the 20th century.

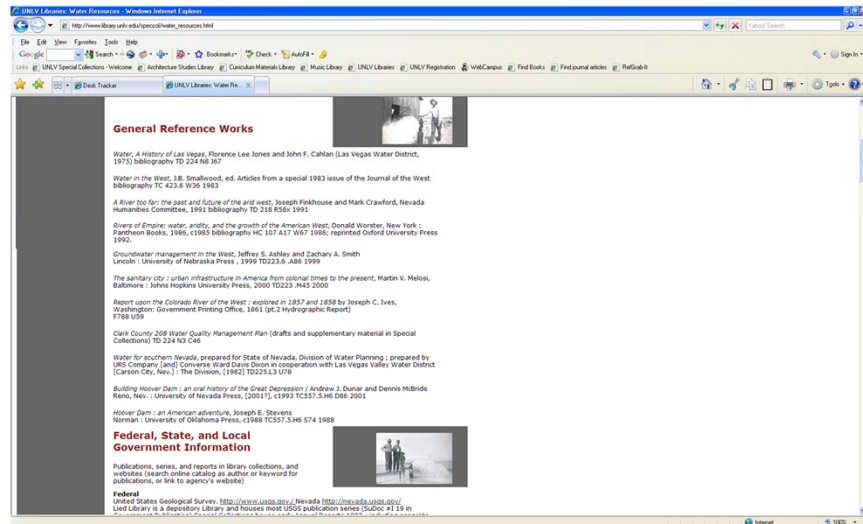
# UNLV Special Collections and History of Water Archival Resources



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The UNLV Special Collections created a general list of reference works for patrons several years ago on static html pages. This reference page included general reference works; Federal, State and Local government Information; maps and even microform resources on the subject of water. This subject guide was a source for information for many years on the water and water management in Las Vegas, Southern Nevada and the West.

# UNLV Special Collections and History of Water Archival Resources



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The general references works contains an index of books ranging from “A History of Las Vega)s by Florence Lee Jones to “Hoover Dam: An American Adventure” by Joseph E. Stevens.

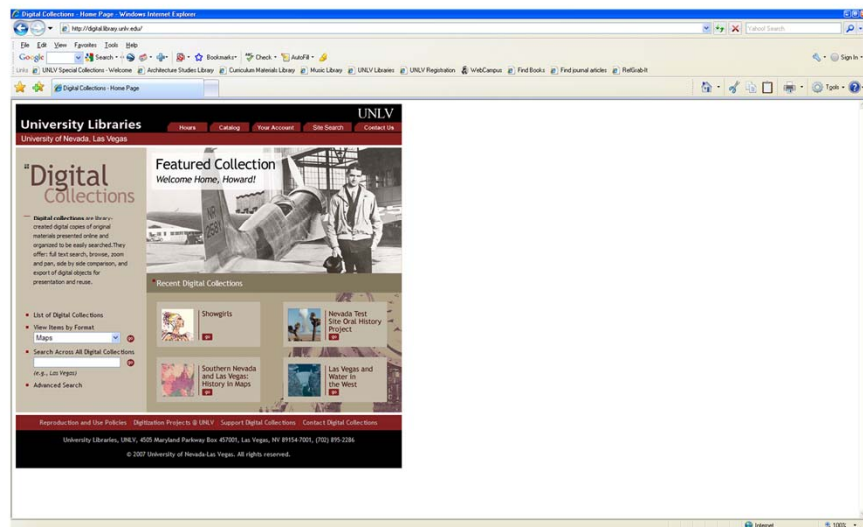
The Federal government material listed websites ranging from the United States Geological Survey to the U.S. Department of the Interior.

The Nevada sources ranged from the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology to the Nevada Division of Water Resources.

The Clark County/Southern Nevada Region sources provided websites like the Southern Nevada Water Authority and the Clark County Regional Flood Control District.

Finally, the Las Vegas section provides website links ranging from the Las Vegas Water Authority District to the Storm Water Quality Management Committee.

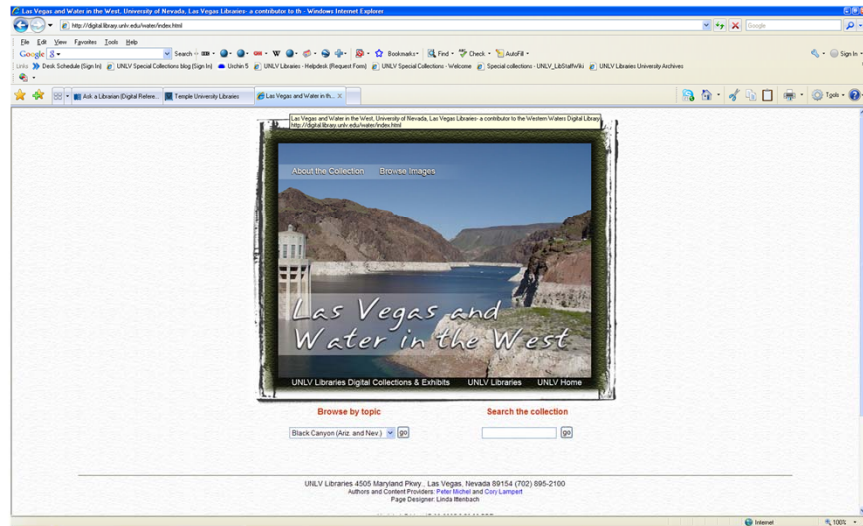
# UNLV Libraries and CONTENTdm Databases



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The “Las Vegas and Water in the West” project is part of a much larger one under the banner of The Western Waters Digital Library (WWDL). This consortium of libraries was brought together by the Greater Western Library Alliance and funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Specifically, this alliance allows a centralized access to digital resources from academic institutions from various western states. It’s primary focus is the Colorado, Columbia, Platte and Rio Grande Rivers.

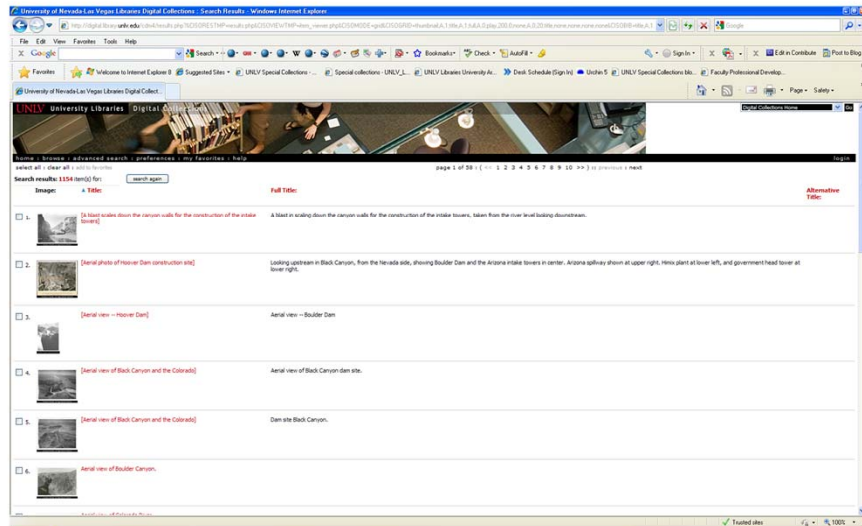
# UNLV Libraries and CONTENTdm Databases



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What is a CONTENTdm database? It's a database that allows your digital collections to be accessed by anyone, anywhere, anytime.

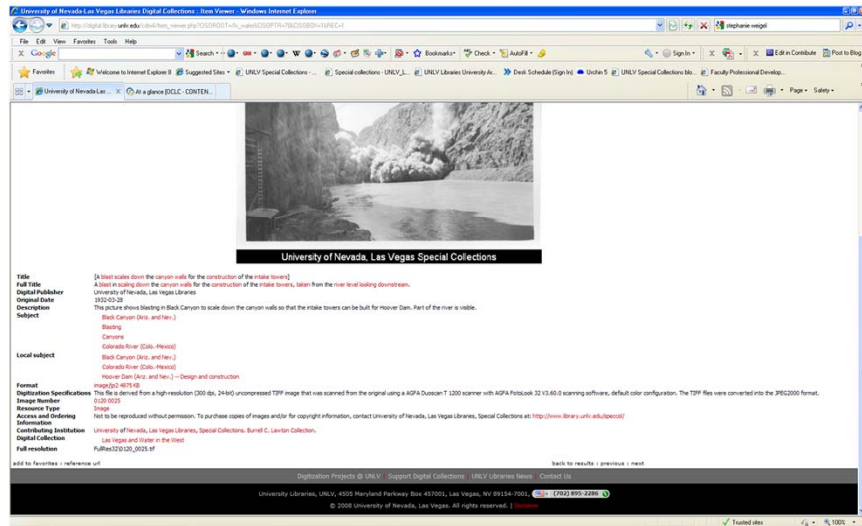
# CONTENTdm : Digitizing Our Material



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It stores and manages your digitized newspapers, books, maps, photographs and audio/visual material.

# CONTENTdm: Records

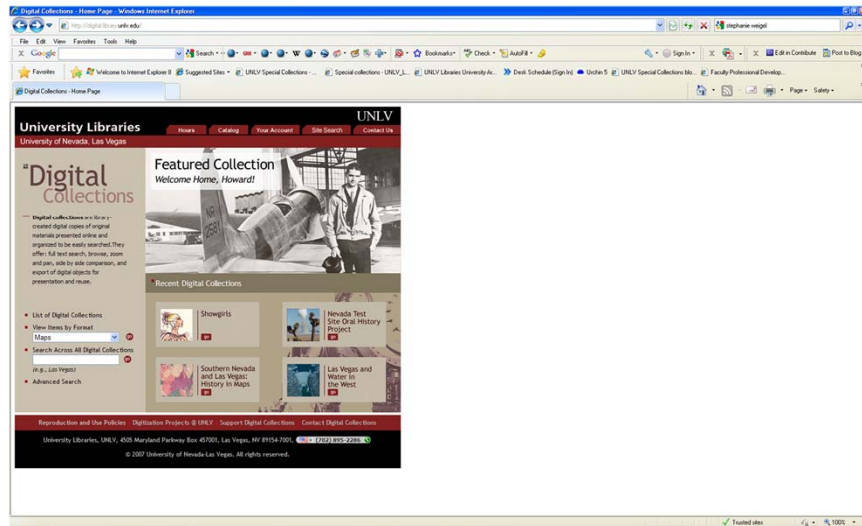


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The material includes a record describing the material. Finally, users can access this database of historical material via the Web.



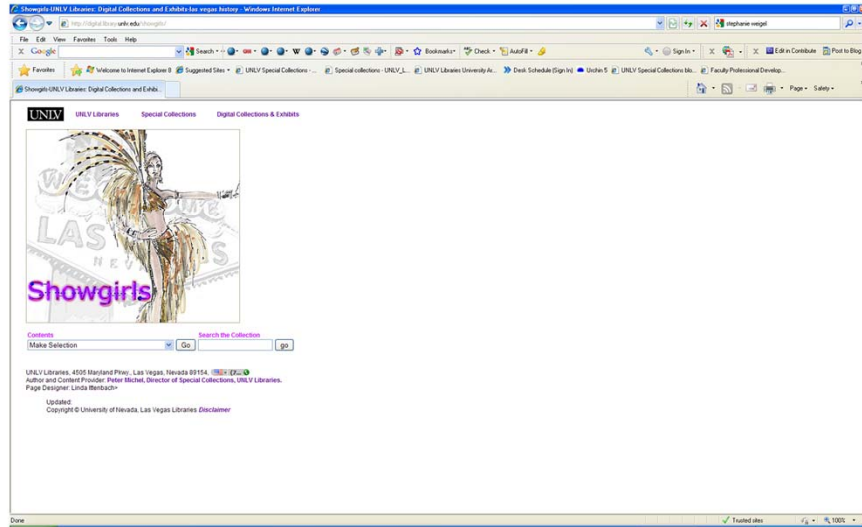
# CONTENTdm Digital Collections at UNLV Libraries



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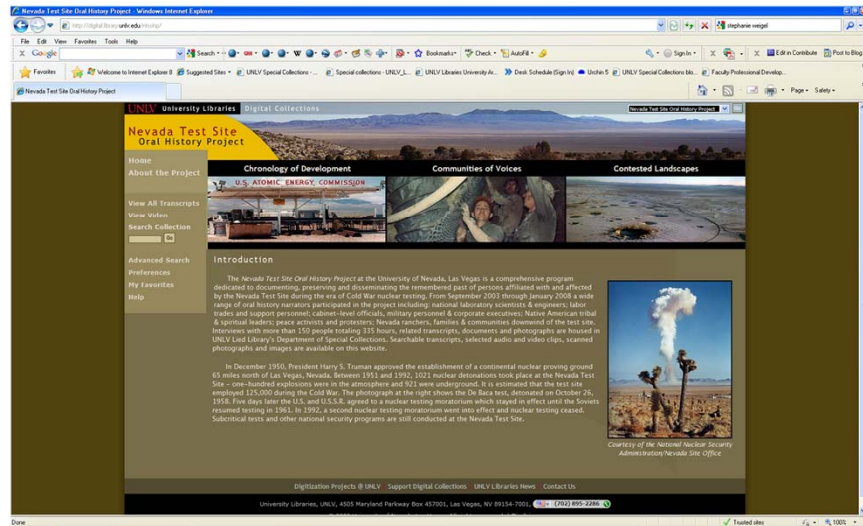
Some examples of current ContentDM related databases within the UNLV Libraries include:

# Showgirls



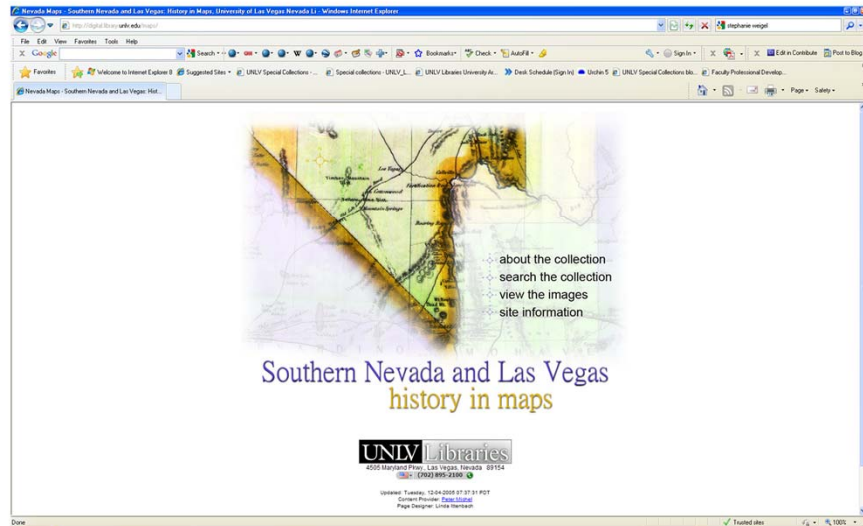
Show Girls,

# Nevada Test Site Oral History Project



Nevada Test Site Oral History Project,

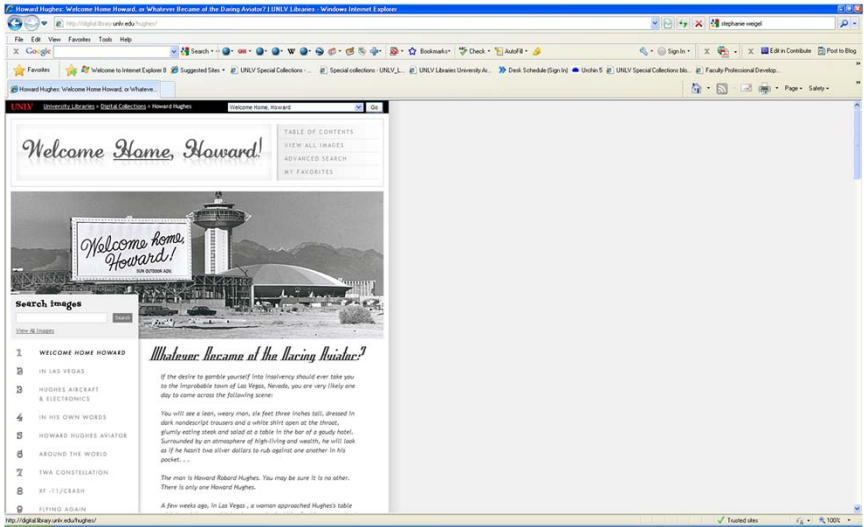
# Southern Nevada and Las Vegas in Maps



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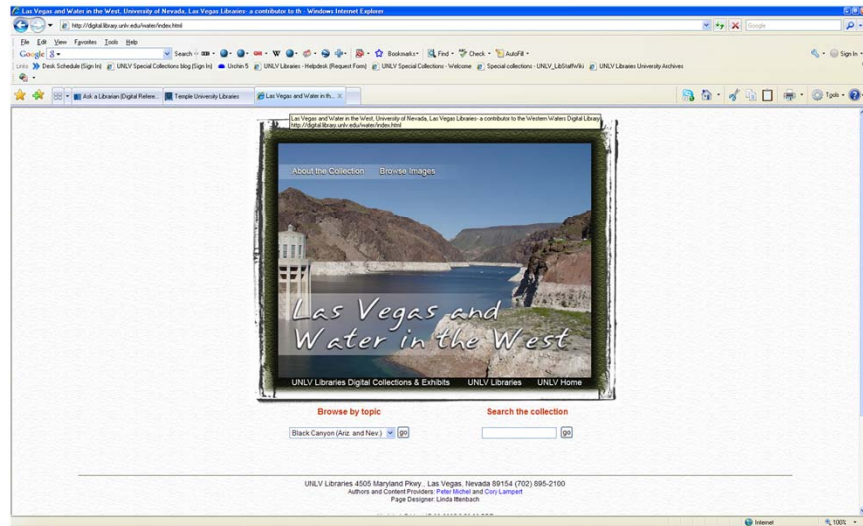
Southern Nevada and Las Vegas: History in Maps,

# Welcome Home Howard!



and Welcome Home Howard!

# Creating the “Las Vegas and Water in the West” Digital Collection



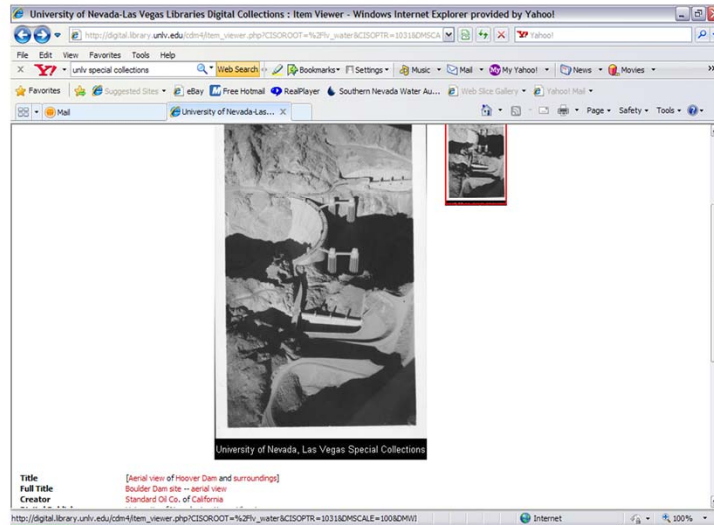
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## History of Water in Las Vegas

In the past, The Colorado River Compact affected Nevada, Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Colorado. Californians had more rights to the water than citizens of Colorado because of the population growth of Southern California in the 1920s and 1930s.

The current issues facing Southern Nevada continue to be water. The Southern Nevada Water Authority has addressed these issues several ways which include encouraging xeriscaping in once green neighborhoods around the Las Vegas Valley. The Water Authority is currently in discussion regarding plans for accessing water from Northern Nevada. However, this will take water away from aquifers that have benefited local farmers and ranchers for generations. Water has been the main issue affecting Las Vegas for years. It is believed water will continue to affect Las Vegas even more so than the economy.

## Creating the “Las Vegas and Water in the West” Digital Collection



The overall agenda for this project and its connection to UNLV's mission is the idea of sustainability of water resources for Las Vegas. Specifically, UNLV researches the topic while UNLV Special Collections collects and provides access to the related documents. Thus, patrons can come to UNLV to research information being created and collected on the topic of “sustainability of water resources.”

For example, UNLV Special Collections contains a wide range of pictures of the Hoover Dam. This made a nice addition The Western Waters Digital Library. Patrons can now access our various photographs.

This was going to be UNLV Special Collections' addition to The Western Waters Digital Library project. The focus was going to be on the Hoover Dam and related material within UNLV Special Collections.

## Steps to Creating Our Digital Collections

1. Special Collections provides the content.
2. UNLV Libraries' Web and Digitization Services (WDS) scans the items provided (photos, documents, and maps).
3. WDS creates the metadata.
4. WDS designs the website.

The basic steps to setting up a digital collection within UNLV Libraries is:

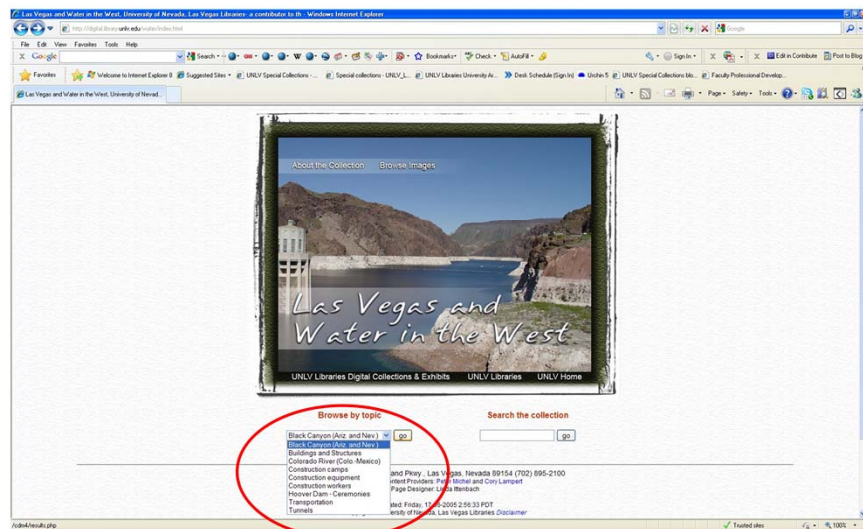
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4. WDS designs the website.

UNLV Special Collections Director Peter Michel was the content provider for this project. He identified photos, books, government documents, reports and brochures that he thought were significant to the creation of the Hoover Dam. Ninety percent of the material came from the photo collections. Next, it was decided early on to focus on information on the planning and creation of the Hoover Dam. Third, a variety of irrigation documents were included. For example, there were documents centering around how helpful the Hoover Dam (i.e., irrigation) was to California and Arizona. There were legal documents included to show how they affected the City of Las Vegas then and now. At the time, Las Vegas was more interested in the advantages of electricity from the Hoover Dam rather than irrigation. Las Vegas was become more of tourist destination not only from people from outside Nevada, but from Hoover Dam workers who lived in nearby Boulder City.

It is interesting to note that Arizona utilized the Hoover Dam for irrigation purposes while California used it for irrigation and electricity. Nevada felt that Las Vegas was going to grow via real estate speculation. Unfortunately, that did not happen (at the time). However, casinos provided a recreational destination for the state of Nevada. A point that would later become a major issue as casinos grew in popularity in Las Vegas. On the other side of the border, California needed power for the fast growing city of Los Angeles. Further, there was a growing demand for water from the farms of the "Inland Empire" located in Southern California.



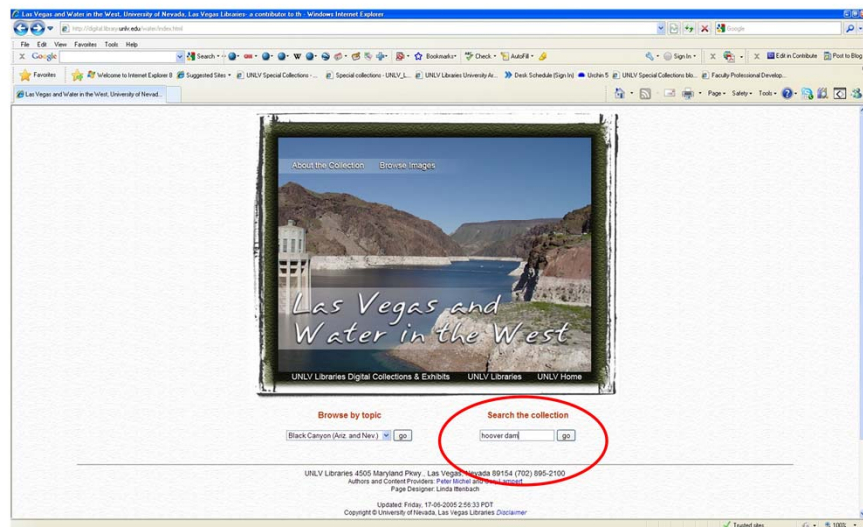
## Searching the Las Vegas and Water in the West Digital Collection



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The searching features of this new digital collection focused on the most common themes. (i.e., browsing by topic). Specifically, it included several areas of interest that included: Black Canyon (AZ and Nevada), Buildings and Structures, Colorado River, Transportation and Tunnels. Overall this collection had standard features which were driven by the metadata that were created for this digital collection. The more detailed the metadata the more precise the search.

## Searching the Las Vegas and Water in the West Digital Collection

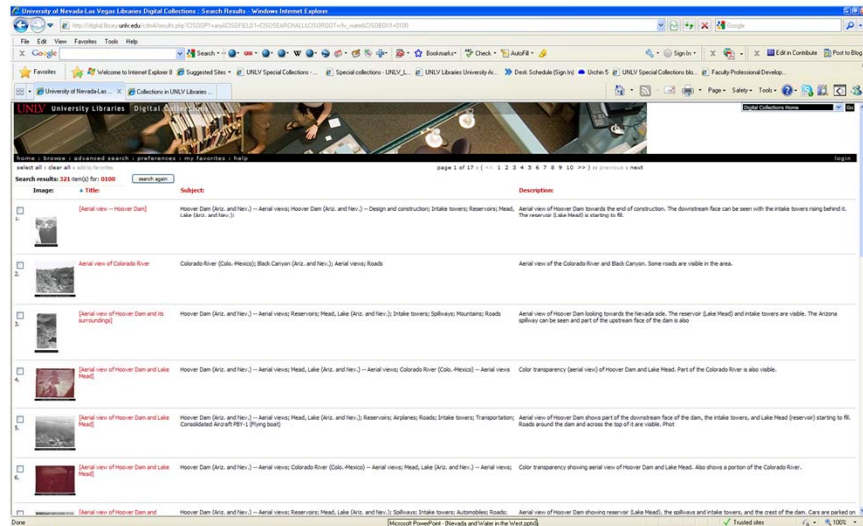


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The other standard feature that was included was the key word search.

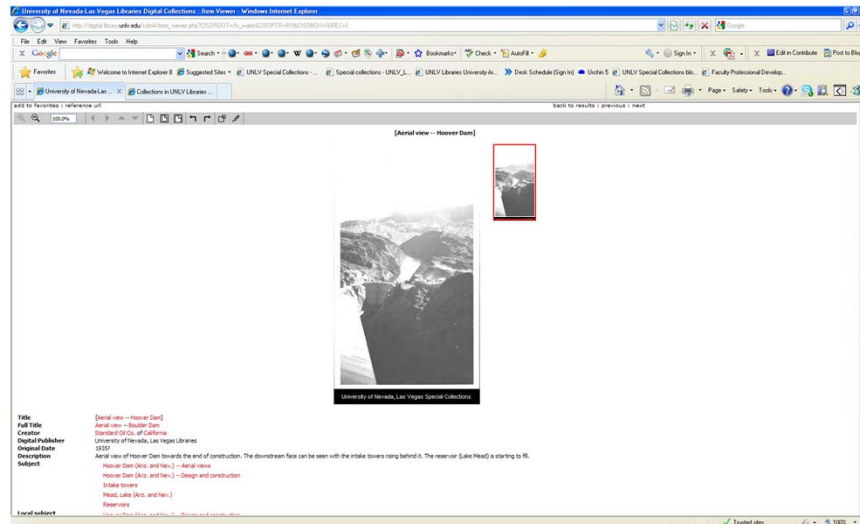
The Las Vegas and Water in the West digital collection was the largest project up to that point for UNLV Special Collections. There was a tight deadline and the Director selected 1000 plus photographs from over 8000.

# Designing the Las Vegas and Water in the West Digital Collection



This project spent a lot of time in terms of the creation of metadata. However, the design and content of this new digital collection was based mostly on several factors. First, the quality of the photo. Second, UNLV Special Collections wanted to show how the Dam was built from beginning to end. Third, there would be photos of workers.

# Designing the Las Vegas and Water in the West Digital Collection

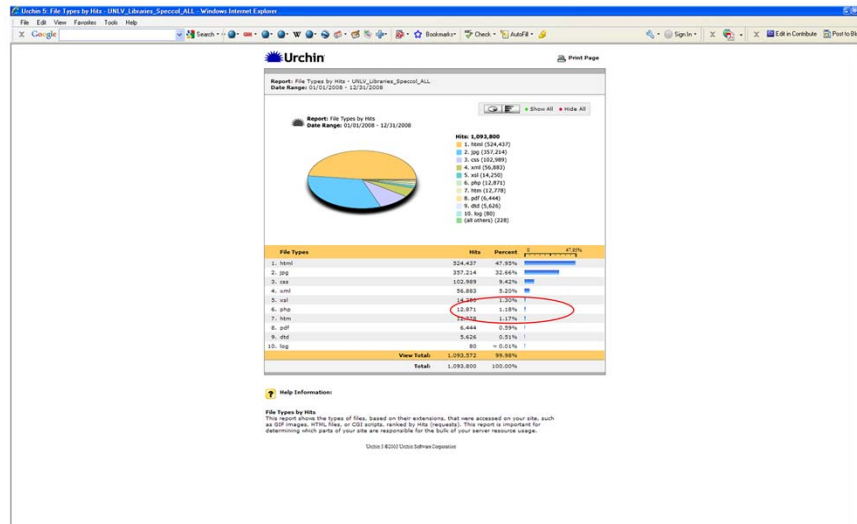


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Fourth, there needed to be the iconic ariel shots. Lastly, they wanted to include as many photos as possible without duplication.

The photographs were taken from two sources: U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the Six Companies. The Six Companies was the consortium that built the Hoover Dam. Each institution had several officials that collected and managed these photographs. Subsequently, these collections were named after them. Specifically, F. M. Murphy, Morgan Sweeny, and Burrell C. Lawton. There are even a series of scrapbooks created by W. H. Bechtel from the company Six Companies. At the same time there were several professional photographers like Glenn Davis who was a local commercial photographer that worked in the Oakes Photographic Studios. This studio was a prominent studio in Southern Nevada. His photographs are now housed in UNLV Special Collections. The Manis Collection is the largest photograph collection within UNLV Special Collections and was compiled by Lloyd F. Manis. Manis operated the Boulder Dam Service Bureau and later the Boulder Visitors Center. This collection contains copies of these photographs from the Bureau of Reclamation and other sources.

# Results of this New Access Tool



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Outcomes:

1. Who is using this collection (i.e., stats.)?

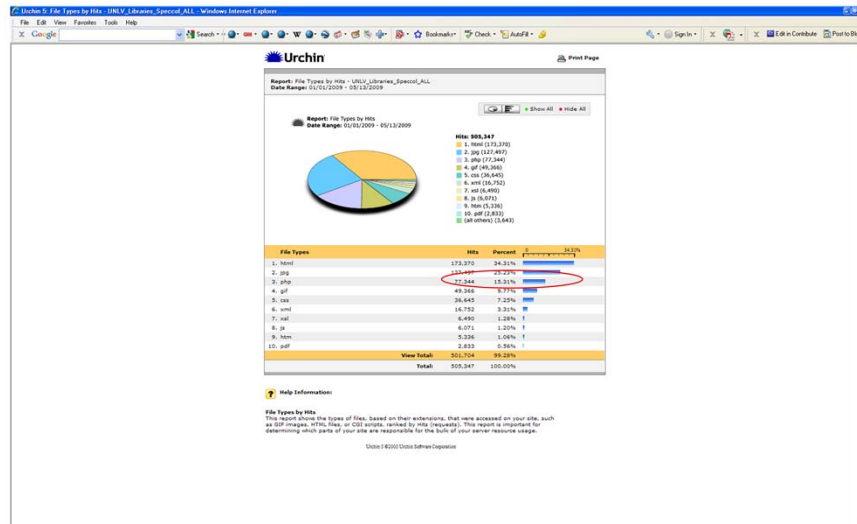
Who is almost impossible to quantify, because people do not self-identify, but here is the breakdown from the web stats (with some assumptions)

- Google users (i.e. general population is top category, then broken down by Nevada, California, Utah- southwest region)
- UNLV users (in-library and on-campus), one can assume these are mostly students, faculty, staff
- community users/researchers (folks that contact us for more info)
- K-12/school districts

2. Where are they being referred from (i.e., websites, search engines, etc.)- in order of popularity

- Google
- Library home page
- Google Images
- Wikipedia (Howard Hughes page)
- Mountain West Digital Library portal
- Yahoo
- MSN
- Western Waters Digital Library
- UNR's web site

# Results of this New Access Tool



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1. Who were you planning to use it?

Everyone. Researchers, students, faculty and the public.

2. Surprises?

The Las Vegas and Water in the West digital project was a big one for UNLV Special Collections. It was the largest one up to that point. UNLV Special Collections was just learning CONTENTdm at the time. It was a project that was based on compound data (e.g., book and brochure pages).

3. How often Used?

It is interesting to note that in 2008 our digital collections were accessed a total of 12,871 times (1.18% of the total hits). So far, in 2009, our digital collections have been accessed a total of 77,344 (15.31% of the total hits)

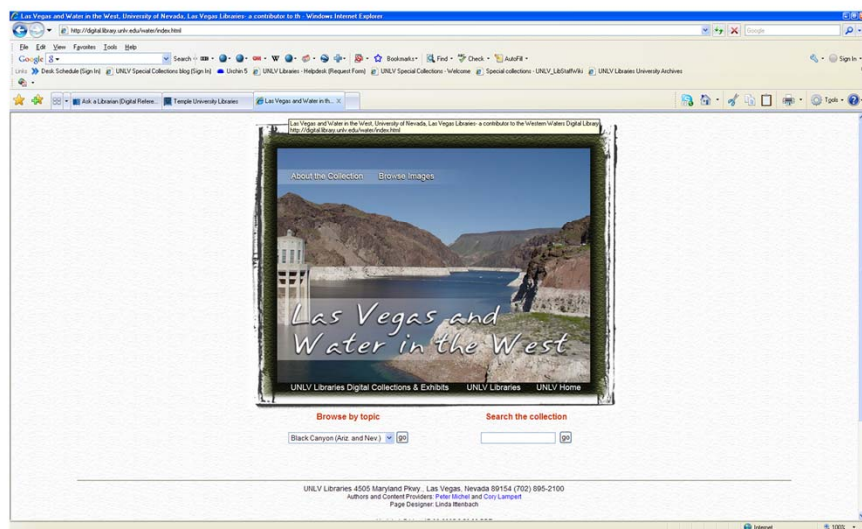
4. Benefits from bring a part of The Western Digital Library (WWDL)?

It was a big national project. Great to work with institutions like the University of Utah. It also created more access and visibility for UNLV Special Collections.

Future/Changes?

UNLV Special Collections will continue to make some changes to expand the Las Vegas and Water in the West digital collection. Water will always be an issue for UNLV Special Collections because the University will continue to focus its research agenda on. Essentially, what affects the City of Las Vegas affects UNLV. That is why UNLV Special Collections will continue to document the sustainability of water in Las Vegas.

# In Conclusion...



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The sustainability of water in the west will always be at the forefront of any southwestern university. In the past, static HTML pages with indexes to water resource information provided an adequate tool for users. Now, ContentDM takes it one step further by being a more dynamic tool for researchers, students and faculty alike. Users will not only be able to understand, but meet the challenges of a growing community in the desert. UNLV's "Las Vegas and Water in the West" digital collection is the new dynamic access tool that will help provide the answers that users need in order to address these water issues.