

5-2011

Columbia University Libraries' digital collections

Tom D. Sommer

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, tsommer10@yahoo.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/lib_articles



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Sommer, T. D. (2011). Columbia University Libraries' digital collections. *College and Research Libraries News*, 72(5), p. 300. American Library Association.

https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/lib_articles/105

This Internet Review is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Scholarship@UNLV with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Internet Review in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Internet Review has been accepted for inclusion in Library Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact digitalscholarship@unlv.edu.

Columbia University Libraries' Digital Collections. Access: <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/digital/collections/>.

Columbia University Libraries has assembled a group of fascinating digital collections that span a wide range of subjects. These include 18 online exhibitions that highlight their collections in a way that provides a comprehensive look into American and World history.

The digital collections on this site provide a broad variety of digitized images, videos, manuscripts, publications, ephemera, oral histories, e-books, reports, and architectural designs. The presentation of so many different formats provides unique access to a wide range of subjects in which Columbia Universities Libraries has collected throughout the years.

An example comes from the New York Real Estate Brochure Collection. Here you have access to a searchable database housing thousands of brochures, floor plans, and price lists from residential and commercial real estate development in New York City from the 1920s to the 1970s. The results lists provide an easy-to-use viewer that allows the researcher to see in incredible detail each item in this digital collection.

Another example showcasing the wide range of digital collections located on this site comes from Chinese Paper Gods collection. This digital collection provides an online visual catalog of more than 200 woodcuts used in folk religious practices in Beijing and other parts of China in the 1930s.

The Online Exhibitions page is another resource for a researcher using the Columbia University Libraries Web site. The difference between the online exhibits and digital collections is that the exhibits are HTML-based,

with scanned items embedded within them as opposed to digital collections which individual items are in searchable databases (with a search box) or indexes. A link to these exhibitions has been added to the top of the Digital Collections page. Users can view exhibits rich in America and World history ranging from the New York Russian Jewish immigrant community to William Shakespeare's 17th-century folios.

The Columbia University Libraries Web site's overall design is pretty straightforward. There are two navigation bars at the top of each page along with a tabs list. These navigation devices allow the user to move around the Web site in an intuitive way. Thus, the Digital Collections' Web page provides user-friendly access to a wide range of unique resources pertaining to American and World history.—
Tom Sommer, University of Nevada-Las Vegas,
thomas.sommer@unlv.edu

Joni R. Roberts is associate university librarian for public services and collection development at Willamette University, e-mail: jroberts@willamette.edu, and Carol A. Drost is associate university librarian for technical services at Willamette University, e-mail: cdrost@willamette.edu