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City of Big (Online) Shoulders

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Archival Resources on the Web

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City of Big (Online) Shoulders

By Hathaway Hester, Archivist and Digital Preservation Librarian, National Association of Realtors®

In honor of the upcoming MAC 2018 Annual Meeting in Chicago, let's take a look at several web resources pertaining to the history of the place poet Carl Sandburg declared the "City of Big Shoulders." With 77 community areas and over 180 years of cityhood, Chicago has lot of history to discover. Although the following is just a small selection of the Windy City's archival resources available online, they cover a breadth of subject matter, documenting the city's communities and institutions, arts and culture, and the daily lives of its inhabitants.

The Black Metropolis Research Consortium (BMRC)

This association of Chicago-area archives, libraries, and universities is dedicated to increasing accessibility to holdings related to African American and African diasporic communities in Chicago and beyond. As part of the consortium's work, the BMRC Database—bmrc.lib.uchicago.edu/searchable-databases/bmrc-database—includes collection-level records for more than 1,000 archival collections located throughout Chicago. In addition, it includes full finding aids for nearly 100 collections it processed on behalf of member institutions. Researchers can browse collections by title or subject to locate personal papers and records of organizations both large and small.

Chicago Film Archives (CFA)

Recipient of a MacArthur Award in 2016, the CFA (www.chicagofilmarchives.org) is a nonprofit repository of moving image collections documenting the history of Chicago and the Midwest. At the CFA's website, users can find detailed descriptions of the films' contents and creators as well as over 1,500 digitized films. Examples of the films available online include the Film Group of Chicago's 1968 *The American Revolution 2*, which explores protests and activism in the city; Robert Ford's 1962 *The Corner*, documenting the Chicago gang the Vice Lords; and Joann Elam's 1978 *Rape*, which provides a feminist perspective on sexual violence against women. The wide range of subject matter contained in the CFA's collections of films and home movies from both professional and amateur filmmakers makes this a valuable resource for researchers from a variety of disciplines.

Chicago Transit Authority (CTA)

The CTA has made more than 150 images available to the public via its Historical Photo Collection at www.flickr.com/photos/ctaweb/sets/72157628053998640. Regularly updated, this collection spans the history of public transportation in Chicago from the late nineteenth century through the 1980s. The images show how Chicago's transportation systems have evolved over time, from steam locomotives and horse-drawn streetcars to modern buses and trains, and also depict the construction of the city's elevated tracks and subway systems. Anyone with an interest in Chicago's infrastructure and built environment, the history of transportation, or a visual record of the city's changing streetscapes will find this an incredibly useful resource.



Explore Chicago Collections

Another consortium-based resource is the online search portal of the Chicago Collections Consortium (CCC), which is comprised of several member institutions including the Chicago History Museum, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Chicago Public Library, at explore.chicagocollections.org. Explore Chicago Collections features digitized primary source materials and detailed finding aids related to the history of greater Chicagoland, from major events and notable personalities to the day-to-day work and life of ordinary Chicagoans. Visitors to the site can browse by topic, name, or neighborhood, and

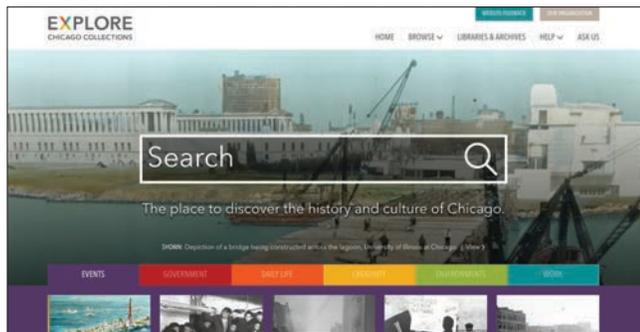
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Jolie Braun, Assistant Editor

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the homepage highlights featured collections in several categories, such as events, government, work, and creativity, allowing for multiple opportunities to discover content. The featured event “1933 World’s Fair,” for example, leads to a page with over 100 related finding aids and more than 1,000 digitized historic images. Bringing together collections from diverse organizations across the region into one centralized search, the CCC helps streamline the research process for students, scholars, educators, and the general public.



Lithuanian Archives Project (LAP)

The LAP (www.lithuanianarchivesproject.org) aims to preserve and provide access to collections documenting the history of the Lithuanian communities and organizations in Chicago. Using free tools such as Wordpress, Flickr, and Soundcloud, the LAP makes much of its collections available online. At the LAP website, researchers can access finding aids, photos, audio recordings, and films pertaining to Lithuanian schools, churches, radio programs, and

other community organizations. Users can view historic photographs documenting the Lithuanian Montessori Society of America, read a scan of Marija Zopliene’s handwritten memoir about growing up in Chicago in a Lithuanian family, and listen to excerpts of the *Sophie Barcus Radio Program*, which “served as the eyes, ears and heart of Lithuanian immigrants in Chicago and the Midwest” during its run from 1932 to 1986.

Studs Terkel Radio Archive

A partnership between the WFMT Radio Network and the Studs Terkel Center for Oral History of the Chicago History Museum, the Studs Terkel Radio Archive (studsterkel.wfmt.com) provides public access to interviews by author and broadcast legend Studs Terkel. From 1952 to 1997, Terkel talked with writers, civil rights leaders, musicians, artists, activists, and ordinary Chicagoans on his daily show on WFMT. Currently, hundreds of interviews are available to stream, and ultimately the archive aims to make every interview available online. For visitors unsure where to begin with the project’s vast offerings, the homepage features a selection of recommended episodes, including interviews with Simone De Beauvoir, Muhammad Ali, Buster Keaton, and Oliver Sacks.

If these resources have you intrigued to learn more about Chicago, please join us at the MAC 2018 Annual Meeting for an up-close and personal view of the city!