1-2017

A Trip through Time: Examining Travel and Tourism Databases

April K. Anderson
Illinois State University, aander2@ilstu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/macnewsletter

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/macnewsletter/vol44/iss3/7
A Trip through Time: Examining Travel and Tourism Databases

By April Anderson, Illinois State University

A rapidly expanding field of study for historians, travel and tourism history has seen an increase in both scholarly publications and online resources dedicated to the subject. While research on this topic can reach back centuries, most scholarship has focused on more modern forms of travel and tourism dating from the late nineteenth century to a post–World War II world. The study of the history of travel and tourism has also been interdisciplinary, seeing students of history as well as business, management, marketing, and other fields who work in recreation and entertainment industries. With this increased interest in the subject, academic libraries and historical societies have worked to digitize their travel and tourism collections to make their materials available to a worldwide audience.

Some online databases are broad and cover a number of subjects including railroad, steam line, and airline travel, documents discussing the health benefits of a particular location, brochures on real estate opportunities, and ephemera for roadside attractions. Other online databases focus on individual locations, sites, or modes of travel. These databases may vary in topic and scope, but they all provide off-site researchers access to materials that even 10 years ago required travel to holding institutions.

Though the study of travel and tourism history is an international subject, this article will only examine sources from the United States.

Central Florida Memory

Central Florida Memory (www.cfmemory.org) is a database that highlights ephemera, memorabilia, monographs, and other items related to the history of Central Florida. The project started in 2002 as a cooperative effort between the University of Central Florida Library, the Orange County Regional History Center, and the Orange County Library System. The initial goal was to identify and digitize items held at each institution that highlight a wide variety of subjects related to the history of Central Florida. The project was awarded two grants from the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS): a National Leadership Grant in 2004 and a Library Services and Technology Act Grant in 2008. In addition to making these materials accessible online, the team behind the project has created “Florida Stories.” Geared toward classroom use, these mini-educational tools use items from the database to tell small stories about the history of the Central Florida region.

The easiest way to find tourism-related items is to do a keyword search in the upper-right-hand search bar on the homepage. Over 250 items are returned, ranging in format from a 1920s pamphlet on driving through Winter Park to a railroad directory from 1904. If you are looking to search more specifically, you can choose the “Collection” tab, and click “More,” where you’ll be taken to a page to narrow down your search by various fields such as format, time period, location, the owning institution, or even a specific newspaper or repository collection.

Miami Digital Archive

Created by the University of Miami Libraries and the University of Miami History Department, Travel, Tourism, and Urban Growth in Greater Miami: A Digital Archive (scholar.library.miami.edu/miamidigital/index.html) is an older site that features a variety of materials from the South Florida region. Researchers can browse through a series of introduction and timeline pages that discuss the history of travel and tourism and how the changes in advertising altered the greater Miami area. The site also examines how travel and tourism helped shape the quickly changing landscape of South Florida by advertising land that was for sale. Images of beaches, sun, and sand drove speculation on land prices and tempted prominent business owners to try their luck in the recreation industry. With a rise in tourism came a rise in modes of travel with the influx of new airlines, railroads, and steam lines making Miami their home.

Based on the design and many of the broken links found throughout, this site that has not been updated in some time. However, the materials contained in the database are accessible and a good sampling of the 11 travel- and tourism-related collections housed at the university’s Archives and Special Collections. All materials in the database in some way reference the original content created in the introduction and timeline pages of the website. The website also gives researchers a handful of bibliographic pages, offering additional resources such as books, journals, newspapers, Internet sites, and archives. Unfortunately, many of the hyperlinks in the resources section are outdated, and users will need to do some extra digging to find the resources.
Buzz Price Collection

Harrison “Buzz” Price was a research economist and economics consultant who worked with entertainment and leisure companies in developing business plans. Price was best known for his work with Roy and Walt Disney in selecting the sites for Disneyland and Disney World and his work in developing the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts). The work Price did was, in its early years, the first of its kind. After graduating in 1951 from Stanford University with a master’s in business administration, Price went to work at the Stanford Research Institute where the Disney brothers hired him. Price spent his career working with themed entertainment companies such as Six Flags, Ripley’s Believe It or Not, and Universal Studios.

In 2003, Price donated his large collection of entertainment research to the University of Central Florida Libraries, Special Collections and University Archives department. Of the hundreds of reports, 180 were selected for digitization and inclusion into the Harrison “Buzz” Price Papers online database (digital.library.ucf.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/BUZ). Early items include a 1950s report showing the estimated budget costs, revenue, and capacity numbers for the Tiki Room at Disneyland; a 1960 preliminary presentation on Palm Beach County, Florida, land use as a potential site for Disney World (which was eventually constructed in Orange County); and space allocation plans for the 1964 New York World’s Fair.

Missouri Division of Transportation Photo Collection

Held at the Missouri State Archives, the Missouri Division of Tourism Photograph Collection (cdm16795.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/divtourt) holds over 95,000 slides depicting the state’s tourism industry from 1967 to 1999. The mission of the Missouri Division of Tourism is to promote travel to the state, thus increasing revenue and economic development. The collection includes images of state festivals, venues, parades, holiday events, professional and college sports, agriculture, various state industries, and tourist attractions. This database is similar to the Miami Digital Archive in that it showcases many images produced to be part of advertising and marketing campaigns meant to drive tourism to the state. The database covers a variety of subjects including transportation, sports and leisure, nature, and tourist destinations. The database also gives researchers insight into how a land-locked state worked in a post–World War II era to pull tourism away from the beaches and to the Midwest.

Como Springs Resort

A once thriving Utah resort, Como Springs was known for its geothermally heated spring-water lake and as a place of relaxation for its visitors. Debuting in 1889, the resort stayed open for only seven years when an economic downturn forced it to close. The resort

(Continued on page 30)
reopened in 1921 and stayed in business until 1986. The photographs featured in the Como Springs Resort digital collection (dc.weber.edu/cdm/search/collection/CSR) provided by Weber State University’s Stewart Library show the life of a nineteenth- and twentieth-century western American travel destination. The collection conveys a sense of what tourists in two centuries experienced at the resort.

While most travel and tourism databases include items that show the evolution of a location or region through advertising, the Como Springs Resort database documents the life of a single space and the changes it made to survive. While we don’t know for sure, the images were likely created both for advertising and documentary purposes.

Hotel Utah

Hotel Utah was an early-twentieth-century Renaissance revival–style hotel located in downtown Salt Lake City. Funded by both the Church of Latter-day Saints and local business leaders, it was opened in 1911 and became a popular western hotel. Wings were added to the building in 1974; and the Westin Hotels chain took it over in 1984. However, in that same year, it ceased hotel operations. In the early 1990s, the building underwent renovations and was remodeled into an all-purpose community building. It was renamed the Joseph Smith Memorial Building and is used by both the Church of Latter-day Saints and the local community.

Similar to the Como Springs Resort database, Hotel Utah (content.lib.utah.edu/cdm/search/collection/hotelut) shows researchers life in the building through its 76-year history as a hotel. Though the hotel was renovated and reopened during the national urban renewal movement of the 1990s, the database only shows its history through its hotel years via images used to document events.

Two collections for the hotel, administrative records and photographs, are held at the University of Utah Libraries, Special Collections department. Approximately 4,367 images have been digitized from the photographs collec-

Three young women sit along the shore. Copyright 1889–2010 Morgan County Historical Society. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-No Derivatives 4.0 International License, creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0.
tion and made available to researchers via the library’s J. Willard Marriott Digital Library website. Patrons can access the collection by either keyword searching the site or browsing alphabetically. Images include event photographs, both for the hotel and hosted by the hotel; interior images from varying years; construction images; and even images of textile swatches considered for the hotel’s décor. While only a handful of the images have links to the finding aid, the link provided in the metadata is broken. To see the finding aid for the collection, you must navigate to the library’s Special Collections website where you will be linked out to a finding aid database. There, you can keyword search Utah Hotel to access the finding aids for both the records and photograph collections.

The field of historic travel and tourism study is still relatively new. Academic, public, and private libraries and societies are finding new uses for long-held content and discovering new collections. As these materials are uncovered and described, the range and variety of travel- and tourism-related digital content will continue to grow. Researchers who themselves were once tourists traveling to repositories can now explore the world of travel and tourism with just the click of a mouse.

Notes


7. Stewart Library Digital Collections, “Como Springs Resort,” Weber State University, dc.weber.edu/cdm/search/collection/CSR, accessed October 21, 2016. All images in the database contain a similar description from which this is derived. No other descriptive guide currently exists for this collection.


