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Bluegrass Online: A Digital Excursion through Kentucky

By Jennie Cole, *The Filson Historical Society*

It's been seven years since the MAC Annual Meeting was held in Louisville, Kentucky. While Kentucky is still known for horse racing, bourbon, bluegrass, and beautiful landscapes (and perhaps some fried chicken as well), much has changed on our digital collections front. Read on to get a sneak peek before visiting Lexington for "MAC in the Bluegrass State" this May and to learn more about the state's rich history being shared online by Kentucky's colleges, universities, libraries, and cultural heritage institutions.

The **Kentucky Digital Library** (KDL) (kdl.kyvl.org) is a great starting point, as it provides access to digital collections from repositories around the state. Through this portal you can read the text of Kentucky newspapers going back to 1787, browse nearly 80,000 images documenting all corners of this unique and varied state, and review finding aids and digital images of archival collections, along with viewing maps and books from the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. View images of Lexington starting in the 1920s and continuing through the decades via the Lafayette Studio Photograph Collection. Lexington-area repositories with collections in the KDL include the Lexington Fayette Urban County Government, which has digitized the 1858 City of Lexington Charter; the Lexington Public Library, featuring digital runs of the *Kentucky Gazette* and the Elmer L. Foote Lantern Slide Collection; and Transylvania University, with online offerings including historical medical theses, finding aids, and the Bullock Photo Collection, which features images in and around Lexington and Fayette County, Kentucky.

The **University of Kentucky Special Collections Research Center's** Explore UK (exploreuk.uky.edu) is another fantastic way to virtually visit Lexington, the home of UK, and learn more about its history and citizens. From the homepage, you can quickly navigate to collection guides, oral histories, the *Kentucky Kernel* newspaper, images, yearbooks, and athletic publications; browse by format, collection, or publication year; or conduct your own search. A quick search for "Carrick" shows architectural plans and images for the Dr. J. C. Carrick House, the site of the Annual Meeting reception. A multitude of

online exhibits relate to various topics on the university and Kentucky at the University of Kentucky Special Collections Library Exhibits page (libraries.uky.edu/libpage.php?lweb_id=1032&llib_id=13<ab_id=1701).

Also at the University of Kentucky is the **Louis B. Nunn Center for Oral History**, which provides online access to many of its collections via the SPOKE oral history collections management system (www.kentuckyoralhistory.org). This database allows visitors to browse by topic, person, project, and more; once you have selected an online interview, listen, read along, or search the transcript! The wide breadth of topics includes agriculture, diversity, Appalachia, education, gender, and more. Of particular note is the Nunn Center's Bourbon in Kentucky Oral History Collection, documenting the growth of this important Kentucky industry.

When you think of the Bluegrass, you have to think of horses. The **International Museum of the Horse** provides access to exhibits and collections on the history of the horse via its website (www.imh.org). Lexington is also home to **Keeneland**, a beautiful racetrack with a history of meets and sales of thoroughbred horses. Keeneland Library's "Collections" page (keeneland.com/discover/collections) connects researchers with its online offering, *The Daily Racing Form*.

Not far from Lexington, three Kentucky institutions provide additional online resources for discovering more about the Bluegrass State. **Eastern Kentucky University Archives and Special Collections** (archives.eku.edu) has a variety of online tools providing access to its collections, including its digital library, Discover EKU; online oral histories from the Berge Oral History Center; and Encompass, a digital archives of the research, creative works, and history of Eastern Kentucky University. **Berea College's Special Collections and Archives** (libraryguides.berea.edu/index.php?group_id=334) provides digital access to letters, photos, yearbooks, audio, and video through Berea Digital, an online repository. Of particular note is Berea's Sound Archive, which documents Appalachian history and culture, and the history of Berea College. The recordings are especially strong in the areas of traditional music, religious expression, spoken

lore, radio programs, oral history, and college events and personalities. The **Georgetown College Archives and Special Collections** (www.georgetowncollege.edu/library/archives) makes various oral histories from its collection available online.

Institutions from all around Kentucky provide online access to collections. Look north to **Northern Kentucky University Digital Collections** (steelyarchives.nku.edu/digitalcollections.html) for online access to family papers, letters, and diaries about the Civil War, along with a digitized postcard collection. In eastern Kentucky, **Appalshop**, a nonprofit, multidisciplinary arts and education center in the heart of Appalachia, makes available preserved films, video and audio (www.appalshop.org/archive/preservation), including two local television collections from the 1970s and 1980s (archive.org/details/appalshoparchive) that explore cultural aspects of the region. Also documenting this region is the **Digital Library of Appalachia** (dla.acaweb.org), which includes contributions from many Kentucky institutions, including the **University of Pikeville**, which also has its own Digital Archives (cdm16953.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm) documenting the institution's history since 1889.

Looking westward, the **Jackson Purchase Digital Archives at Murray State University** (jpda.murraystate.edu/greenstone/cgi-bin/library.cgi) documents the history and culture of the Jackson Purchase area of southwest Kentucky. **Western Kentucky University's Department of Library Special Collections** (wku.edu/library/dlsc) and **Kentucky Museum** (wku.edu/kentuckymuseum) provide online access to collections via KenCat, a searchable database of holdings; TopSCHOLAR, WKU's digital repository; and online exhibits. The **University of Louisville's Digital Collections** (digital.library.louisville.edu/cdm) include rare and unique images, documents, and oral histories from the archives, special collections, and other campus units. The **Filson Historical Society**, also

in Louisville, makes a portion of its photograph collection available online via PastPerfect (filson.pastperfectonline.com) and web galleries (filsonhistorical.org/galleries).

Returning to the central part of the Bluegrass, the **Kentucky Historical Society** (KHS) (history.ky.gov) provides access to its holdings on Kentucky's rich history through a Digital Collections site as well as an objects catalog. Be sure to also check out KHS's Civil Rights Movement in Kentucky oral history project, which provides access to audio and video excerpts and transcripts to advance understanding of the history and the legacy of the civil rights movement in Kentucky. This project, presented by the Kentucky Oral History Commission, a program of KHS, is one of many included in **Pass the Word** (passtheword.ky.gov), a discovery tool for oral history collections throughout the state of Kentucky. Over 100 archives participate by contributing their collections information to this central catalog. These oral histories cover such diverse topics as African American education in south central Kentucky, the American Printing House for the Blind's corporate memory project, and Kentucky agriculture after tobacco. Also in Frankfort, the **Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives** has created e-Archives (kdla.ky.gov/records/e-archives/pages/default.aspx) as a way of managing digital public records and making them available. This resource includes the Kentucky official website archives, Confederate pension records, and records regarding the famous Hatfield and McCoy feud!

As you can see, there is no shortage of digital collections and tools available to those who have an interest in Kentucky's rich and vibrant heritage, but this is just the tip of the iceberg. Many more Kentucky institutions make online content available, only an Internet search away! We hope you will experience the culture and heritage of the Bluegrass State first-hand when you join us in May for the MAC Annual Meeting.