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Archival Resources on the Web—Emily Symonds Stenberg, Assistant Editor, Washington University at St. Louis

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Paris of the Plains: Digital Tour of Kansas City

By Molly Khan, Johnson County Community College

When people think of Kansas City, the aroma of barbeque and the sounds of jazz probably come to mind. Kansas City, the host city for the 2014 MAC Annual Meeting, *The Syncopations of History*, is influenced by westward expansion, the Civil War, agriculture, and the arts. Kansas City is also recognized for hundreds of beautiful public and private fountains, giving it the nickname “Paris of the Plains.” All of these factors contribute to its unique blend of history and culture, allowing present-day city dwellers to navigate between distinct neighborhoods while appreciating reminders of the wild West, jazz era, picturesque architecture, and boulevards that have put Kansas City on the map. The following online resources provided by area cultural institutions provide a glimpse into the history of the city, allowing you to uncover what makes it a unique destination.

For an introduction to Kansas City history, the **Missouri Valley Special Collections** created by the Kansas City Public Library (www.kchistory.org/index.php) provides an excellent digital overview. This resource displays photograph collections alongside curated digital displays, allowing users to quickly view the core themes and collections available. Missouri Valley Special Collections has an easy-to-browse photograph collection, featuring the people, architecture, and culture of Kansas City. It also offers digital exhibits, guiding users through some of the most influential periods in the history of the city. If you are interested in Civil War history, you will want to check out the library’s digital exhibit, **Civil War on the Western Border: The Missouri-Kansas Conflict, 1854–1865** (www.civilwaronthewesternborder.org). This digital exhibit allows visitors to explore a full spectrum of factors that influenced the Missouri-Kansas conflict through documents, essays, and photographs along with time lines, maps, and an excellent glossary. This exhibit is organized to enable users to study the dynamics of the conflict between these two states.

The development of Kansas City jazz is central to the identity of the city, and the University of Missouri–Kansas City’s LaBudde Special Collections and Marr Sound Archives (library.umkc.edu/spec-col-digital-projects) offers a variety of resources that explore the musicians and music that made Kansas City one of the cradles of jazz. The digital exhibit **Musicians Local No. 627 and the Mutual Musicians Foundation: The Cradle of Kansas City Jazz** (library.umkc.edu/spec-col/local627/index.htm) introduces the viewer to Local No. 627, which was established in 1917 as the “Colored Musicians Union” and provided support for African American musicians. Materials on some of the city’s jazz musicians like Nat “King” Cole and Wilbur “Buck” Clayton, sheet music, and the music publication *The Pitch* are also highlighted in this digital exhibit.

For those curious about the nickname “Paris of the Plains,” the **City of Fountains Foundation** website at www.kcfountains.com explains the significance and location of the famous Kansas City fountains. This website includes an image gallery of the fountains and sculptures in the city along with a map to guide visitors on a digital, or physical, tour of the fountains. The fountains were first instituted by the Humane Society to create a clean source of drinking water for the city’s animals, and they are now incorporated into the designs of modern building projects.

The State Historical Society of Missouri provides a bird’s-eye view of Missouri history through the digital portal **Missouri Digital Heritage**, www.sos.mo.gov/mdh. This resource aggregates content from institutions across the state, providing access to photographs, primary sources, newspapers, videos, sound recordings, and personal papers that explore the history and culture of Missouri. The website organizes its resources into collections and exhibits, showcasing content related to everything from the Lewis and Clark Expedition to the outlaws Frank and Jesse James. The participation of state and local archives,

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Emily Symonds Stenberg, Assistant Editor

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museums, historical societies, institutions of higher education, and public libraries makes possible the range of resources and topics offered by Missouri Digital Heritage.

The suburban development of Kansas City plays a major role in the modern metro area. **JoCoHistory**, www.jocohistory.net, created through a partnership between the Johnson County Museum and the Johnson County Public Library, offers a glimpse into the development of Johnson County, Kansas, which is part of Kansas City's southwestern suburbs. This digital collection explores the different people, towns, and cities of Johnson County. The towns and cities section of JoCoHistory features an interactive map of the different communities in Johnson County, allowing access to photos, articles, and resources about each community. Through this resource, learn the identities of each suburban district and see how these areas evolved alongside Kansas City.

For those interested in the political history of the Kansas City area, the **Harry S. Truman Library and Museum** and the **Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics** are located within driving distance of the Kansas City metro area. The Truman Museum, located in Independence, Missouri, offers online access to photographs, presidential documents, and political cartoons about the 33rd president at www.trumanlibrary.org. The Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics (luna.ku.edu:8180/luna/servlet/kuluna01kui-9-9) is located on the campus of the University of Kansas and features congressional materials relating to former Kansas senator Bob Dole's career in politics, his WWII military career, and materials from his early life growing up in Russell, Kansas.

The Kansas Historical Society provides a variety of online resources dedicated to the state history of Kansas. **Kansas Memory**, www.kansasmemory.org, is a good place to start and features an interactive map allowing users to explore the resources by county along with outlining the major topics and turning points in state history. The Kansas Historical Society also offers **Kansapedia**, www.kshs.org/portal_kansapedia, an online encyclopedia of Kansas history. Along with general research headings and topics, Kansapedia classifies a category of materials under "Cool Things," which features items such as Amelia Earhart's Christmas cards and a quilt from Nicodemus, Kansas. These artifacts provide easy entry into interesting facets of Kansas history.

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Digital Tour of Kansas City

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Kansas City residents are crazy about basketball and James Naismith, the creator of the game and the first basketball coach at the University of Kansas (KU). The University Archives section of the **KU Digital Collections**, lib.ku.edu/ku-digital-collections, provides a glimpse into the life and work of Dr. Naismith. Photographs, newspaper articles, and publications about the creation of basketball are searchable through the University Archives digital collection. KU Digital Collections also offers Kansas City aerial photographs, taken in 2002 and showing recent development of the area, which can be compared to many of the historical photographs of Kansas City.

The variety of online content available through the cultural institutions in the Kansas City area is as diverse as the history of the two states it shares. I hope these online resources spark your interest in Kansas City and reveal why it is an exciting location for the 2014 MAC Annual Meeting!



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