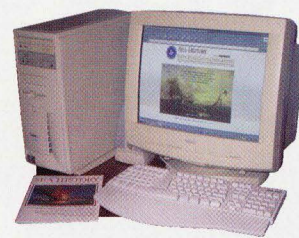


Maritime History on the Internet, A Research Guide

by Peter McCracken



There can be no question that the internet has revolutionized nearly every field of research and interest for human knowledge. Maritime history is no different. Harnessing the power of networked computers makes it possible to access and process incredible amounts of information not previously available, opening exciting new avenues for research and discovery.

At the same time, anyone using the internet for research must keep several caveats in mind: though sites may appear current, many outdated sites—long forgotten by their creators—litter cyberspace. Always look for a date that indicates when the site was last updated, and then take that with a grain of salt. Especially when a site is not affiliated with a reputable organization, consider what motives the creator might have: it's easy to see a web author judiciously editing and emending the history of his brutal sea captain ancestor.

The following is a collection of sites offering reliable places to start exploring sea history on the web and provides examples of free resources available to researchers.

A 'portal' is a site that brings together links to multiple sites on a general subject. Several maritime museums provide excellent portals, which are often good places to begin doing research. One of the most notable sites is the National Maritime Museum's "maritime information gateway," called PORT, at <http://www.port.nmm.ac.uk/>. The dozens of Research Guides at PORT, at <http://www.port.nmm.ac.uk/research/guides.html>, are particularly valuable in guiding one's research, as is the Australian National Maritime Museum's subject guide site at <http://www.anmm.gov.au/LIB/SUBJECT.HTM>. Mystic Seaport's research page at <http://www.mysticseaport.org/research/nf-index.cfm> provides information about highlights from their collections such as their photography and ships' plans collections.

For lists of individual maritime museums (not just those with an online presence) see <http://www.maritimemuseums.net/>, or <http://www.bb62museum.org/usnavmus.html> for US museums, and <http://www.bb62museum.org/wrldnmus.html> for museums outside the US.

The US Naval Historical Center provides a useful overview of US naval resources at <http://www.history.navy.mil/>. One reliable individual webpage is John Kohnen's list of thousands of sites at <http://www.boat-links.com/boatlink.html>.

The internet allows organizations to spread the word about their resources much further than would otherwise be the case. For example, the Polynesian Voyaging Society, at <http://www.pvs-hawaii.com>, was one of the first maritime-related groups on the web, and they continue to maintain an extensive site.

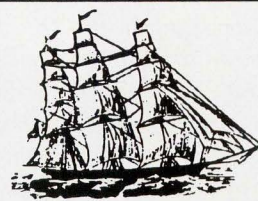
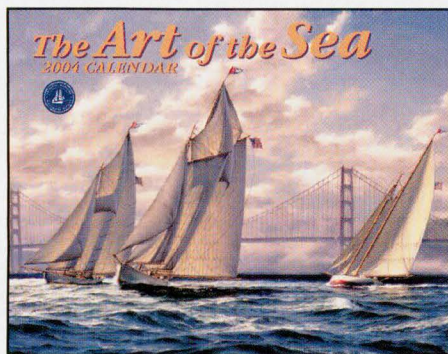
The internet is particularly good at processing and distributing lots of data very quickly. My own site, <http://www.shipindex.org>, compiles over 100,000 ship names from indexes to dozens of books and journals, and indicates where one can learn more about them.

One fascinating site, <http://www.shiplogmapper.org/>, allows individuals to enter location information for a voyage and share the travels of that voyage with anyone on the web. As researchers add data, it will become a compendium of data about numerous otherwise unknown voyages. This free site is one of the best examples of what the web can do for amateur and professional historians alike.

Many, many more sites in maritime history exist. Suggestions for other sites worth mentioning are welcome at shipindex@yahoo.com. ⚓

The Art of the Sea Calendar for 2004

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