

Pirates Off the Port Bow

by Peter McCracken

As a topic for research on the Web, piracy offers an abundance of useless information among a few deposits of reliable sources. Do a search for “piracy” or “pirates” and you’ll find thousands of sites, the vast majority of which are completely irrelevant. A search for something more specific, such as “piracy maritime history,” will produce a better set of results, but you’ll still have a lot of wading to do. Let’s explore some ways of searching for relevant information, along with a sampling of the better sites out there.

“Webrings” are an interesting approach to online communities. People with similar interests link all their sites together in a single, subject-specific “ring.” One can surf from one site in the ring to the next, see all the sites in the ring, or jump randomly from one spot to another. Any site can be added to a webring; there’s generally no vetting process for these communities. Nevertheless, they do offer a good way of linking together sites sharing at least some similarities. Webrings never gained the popularity that was expected for them, but if you find a ring that matches your interests, it’s certainly worth investigating. One pirate ring is situated at <http://www.ringsurf.com/netring?action=info&ring=pirate>; it contains over 80 related sites.

“Pirates and Privateers,” maintained by Cindy Vallar at <http://www.cindyvallar.com/piratelinks.html>, provides a nice overview of piracy-related links. The “Pirate Image Archive” at <http://www.piratehaven.org/~beej/pirates/> has a great collection of, well, images of pirates. “American Journeys,” created by the Wisconsin Historical Society and posted at <http://www.americanjourneys.org>, contains nearly 200 documents—and over 18,000 pages—of eyewitness accounts of early American exploration, many of which relate to piracy. This is an impressive site that has many primary resources available to all for free.

The North Carolina Maritime Museum offers lots of information about Blackbeard, whose ship, *Queen Anne’s Revenge*,

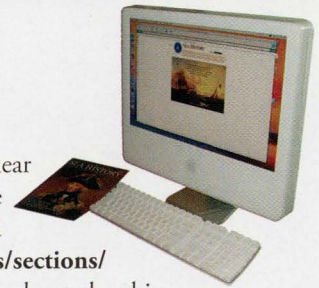
was likely discovered off Beaufort near the museum several years ago. The museum has a page about Blackbeard at <http://www.ah.dcr.state.nc.us/sections/maritime/Blackbeard/> and another about the ship and its excavation at <http://www.ah.dcr.state.nc.us/qar/>.

The weekly piracy report at <http://www.icc-ccs.org/prc/piracyreport.php> reminds us that piracy is not relegated to history books; modern sailors, especially in Asia, are dealing with pirates on a daily basis. With much larger ships and smaller crews, modern sailors have their work cut out for them when dealing with pirates and shouldn’t be forgotten.

Finally, don’t forget the silly side. “Talk Like a Pirate Day” occurs annually on September 19. This is a great example of an internet-created community: two guys in Oregon started talking like pirates one day each year, then e-mailed Dave Barry about it. He wrote a column in September 2002—the rest is a very impressive history, indeed. Learn more than you wanted to know at <http://www.talklikeapirate.com>. Other virtual pirate communities, where you can *type* like a pirate, are at <http://www.pyracy.com>, <http://www.noquartergiven.net>, <http://piratesinparadise.com>, and many more than I imagined possible.

Finally, it was bound to happen eventually, but it happened earlier than I would have liked. In the last issue, I gave incorrect information about how to search for books in libraries using OCLC’s Open WorldCat project. The correct method is to type in some words from the title or the author, and include “[link:worldcatlibraries.org](http://link.worldcatlibraries.org)”. Apologies, matey...

Suggestions for other sites worth mentioning are welcome at shipindex@yahoo.com. See <http://www.shipindex.org> for a compilation of over 100,000 ship names from indexes to dozens of books and journals. ⚓



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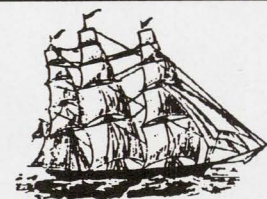
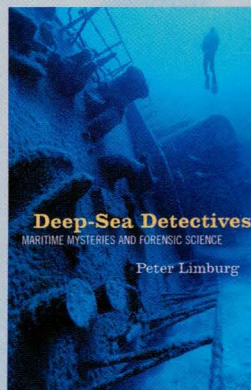
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