

## ShipIndex.org—A Site for Ship Research

Over the past few years, I have written about a wide range of useful online resources here for *Sea History* readers. At the end of each column has been a mention of my own site, **ShipIndex.org**, which lists over 100,000 ship references from various books, journals, and other resources. For a long time, ShipIndex.org was a site managed in my spare time, but it's just become my full-time project. I thought that, in this column, I would talk more about this site in particular, how you can use it, and how it will evolve in the future.

The idea for this resource came from working in a maritime museum library, where the only way to find information about a specific vessel was to look at the indexes to each book on the library's shelves. This wasn't an effective solution, and of course ignored all the titles the library didn't own or I didn't check. I realized that an online guide to just the vessels mentioned in the indexes to many books and journals would be useful to maritime researchers. I began by collecting indexes to books and creating a set of web pages that listed them. When I started an unrelated company with two brothers and a friend, the technologically-inclined brother, Mike, built a searchable database at <http://shipindex.org>. For six years, the site sat there, with no changes to speak of.

In the past three months, however, Mike and I have completely overhauled the existing site and we have plans to dramatically expand the functionality and the reach of the site. For example, we have already made the site much more findable when people are doing Google searches for specific ship

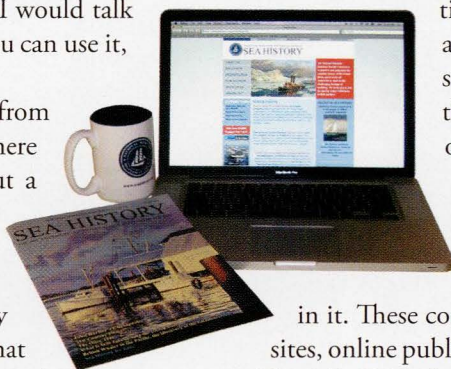
names. We have also added "find in a library" functionality, which allows you to locate the nearest library that holds the book you might be seeking. We have added nearly 40,000 additional entries as well, and these are, in their own way, quite special entries. These entries, generated for us by researchers at the library consortium OCLC, refer to mentions of vessels in OCLC's WorldCat database. All the other entries are mentions of ships in books, essentially, ships that are primary subjects of books. In addition, some of these books are "by" ships—that is, they are journals or logs compiled as official or unofficial records of the vessel.

Over the next few months, we will be dramatically expanding the reach of the database. When the new site is complete, it will have half a million ship references in it. These come from books, journals, CD-ROMs, web sites, online publications, and many other types of resources. The 140,000 references that are currently posted will remain freely available, but we'll offer subscriptions to individuals and institutions for access to the remaining references. While the initial half-million references will be to works in English, over time we'll include many resources in other languages.

My intent is that this site will be very useful for maritime researchers, genealogists, and historians. *Sea History* readers are obvious potential users. As such, I welcome comments and feedback on features or titles to add, or just ideas about how to make the web site better.

Suggestions for column ideas or other sites worth mentioning are welcome at [peter@shipindex.org](mailto:peter@shipindex.org).

—Peter McCracken



### SHIP MODELS

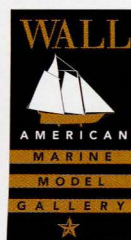
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