

Piracy—At Sea and Online

Piracy on the high seas has drawn quite a lot of attention in the past year. The taking of the *Maersk Alabama* in April 2009 was the first successful pirate raid on an American-flagged ship since the early 19th century. Pirates may not look like Johnny Depp in *Pirates of the Caribbean* of fiction (though we'll see him again soon, as a fourth installation of the movie franchise is due in 2011), but his non-fictional brethren are still having a significant impact on trade and security throughout the world. Countless web pages about historical piracy exist, but, unlike most historical subjects, there's a fairly limited amount of intelligent content online. Most pages are of the "Avast, me hearties!" type, rather than educated discussion. Modern piracy, of course, is no laughing matter, and several valuable sites provide meaningful and critical analysis of the problem.

Cindy Vallar provides a welcome balance to the silliness of most historical piracy web sites, at <http://www.cindyvallar.com/bookaneer.html>. Vallar has been writing and reviewing pirate and maritime fiction and non-fiction for many years. Her web site design is decidedly dated, but the content is quite impressive. On her "Pirate Articles" page, she provides an engaging and intelligent new article each month about some aspect of piracy, from pirate lingo and literature to pirate clothing and vessels. She also posts a long list of other pirate-related sites on her "Pirate Links" page.

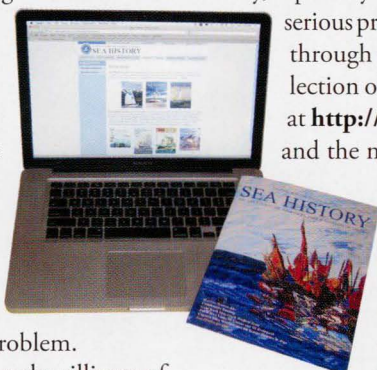
The Pirate Images Archive at <http://bej.us/pirates/> is an older site that features pictures of pirates, their ships, and (presumably) their treasures. Rob Ossian's The Pirate King site <http://www.thepirateking.com> has a lot of background information on historic piracy, compiled by someone who is clearly committed to the retro-pirate lifestyle. For interactive discussion of piracy and related topics, wander over to the Pyrracy Pub <http://pyrracy.com>, which maintains a large and active forum site on piracy, reenactments, and pirate history. This is the type of place where you can carry on a conversation with others interested in historical piracy,

and also find many different tidbits of information and research posted by previous visitors. Warning: posters are, apparently, encouraged to write in "pirate speak."

Modern piracy, of course, is a different matter altogether. Piracy, especially off the coasts of Somalia and Malaysia, presents serious problems for anyone traveling or transporting goods through the region. The *New York Times* provides a collection of articles on its "Times Topics" page about piracy at <http://nyti.ms/nPsYp> (the URL itself is very long; this and the next are abbreviated links but will get you to the right web sites). The International Chamber of Commerce tracks piracy around the world on its Live Piracy Map, at <http://bit.ly/4x82NT>. Its 2010 map pinpoints incidents on Google Maps to show all actual and attempted attacks so far this year. Maps for the past five years are also available, making for a fascinating overview of a very serious modern problem.

On a much sillier note, if you want to increase your exposure to pirate-speak, you can add it to several web sites you use regularly. On Facebook, click on "English (US)" at the bottom of the page, and then select "English (Pirate)" to add pirate-speak throughout the site. On Google, click on "Language Tools" to the right of the search box, and select "Pirate." This is particularly useful when you are tempted to download illegal movies and music. And of course every September 19 is Talk Like a Pirate Day; it is *larrrrrrrgely* documented at <http://www.talklikeapirate.com/>. Finally, 826 Valencia, a writing tutor center and "San Francisco's only independent pirate store," offers a range of pirate tools, links, and retail items at their online shop at <http://www.826valencia.org/store/>.

Suggestions for other sites worth mentioning are welcome at peter@shipindex.org. See <http://www.shipindex.org> for a free compilation of over 140,000 ship names from indexes to dozens of books and journals. ⚓




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