

A Dozen Ways to Promote Cultural Heritage Through Image Collections

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Connecting students with their past prepares them for the present and future. Local people, places, events, and history are often overlooked in today's standardized curriculum. However, exploring local culture is essential for providing context for discussions in the humanities as well as across the curriculum.

Whether students live in an area rich with urban legacies or a rural area that connects with Native American and pioneer cultures, teacher librarians have the opportunity to bring local tradition to life for children and their families.

The Sparking Humanities Conversations project is funded through the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Entrada Institute, a rural Utah nonprofit. The 3-year series of programs used historical photographs to make cultural heritage accessible to youth and the community. This article explores ideas and resources from this project that can be applied to cultural heritage projects in school libraries and communities everywhere.

1. NATIONAL LIBRARY AND ARCHIVE COLLECTIONS

Most countries have developed digital collections that reflect their rich history. The National Library of Australia's Trove <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/>> and the Library and Archives of Canada <<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng>> are examples. In the United States, the Library of Congress and the National Archives house popular digital resources. It's easy to be overwhelmed by the sheer size of these national digital collections, so look for relevant collections to meet your needs.

This is the author's version of the work published as:

Lamb, A. (2020, April). A Dozen Ways to Promote Cultural Heritage Through Image Collections. *Teacher Librarian* 47(4), 56-60,63.

The Library of Congress <<https://www.loc.gov/>> houses photographs useful for cultural heritage projects across America. Seek local connections within specific collections. For instance, acclaimed Depression-era photographer Dorothea Lange took photos for the Farm Security Administration in the late 1930s. Nearly 4,000 of these photos are available online at the Library of Congress <<https://bit.ly/2HjbUBH>>.

While people are most familiar with her Migrant Woman photo taken in Oklahoma, Lange documented the Depression years across the western part of the United States. The photo titled Utah Farm Family in the Orchard at Peach Harvest accurately represents the experiences of rural families during the fruit harvest. This photo was used in discussions with children about the local tradition of picking peaches, apricots, and apples.

Rather than simply searching for a topic, try terms associated with your location, such as your city or state. Also, look for specific subgroups within your area, such as an immigrant group or a Native American tribe. These types of searches may lead to a collection of interest. For instance, a search for "Southern Paiute" leads to dozens of photos from the late 19th century.

2. NATIONAL MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

Increasingly, museums are making their artifact collections available digitally. From Native American drums and rattles to wooden bowls, these visuals provide concrete examples of items used by people long ago. Ask youth to make comparisons between these historical artifacts and the items they use every day.

The Smithsonian Digital Collection <<https://s.si.edu/2NmKKxv>> contains both physical artifacts that have been photographed, along with over a million books and documents that have been scanned. Children can view 19th- and 20th-century tools, clothing, toys, and other items to connect them with their past.

During the 19th century, explorers brought back artifacts on their many travels west. As a result, students can explore collections that reflect famous expeditions. For instance, artifacts brought back from Major John W. Powell's expedition in the 1870s to the American Southwest include materials made from stone, wood, shells, fibers, and other materials.

Show children photos of different types of baskets. Ask them to brainstorm how they might have been used. The Southern Paiute people used baskets to gather seeds and berries, but they also used them for fishing. Baskets were also worn on their heads as sun protection. Example of all types of baskets can be found in the Smithsonian collection.

3. RESEARCH INSTITUTES

Research institutes around the world focus on the natural and social sciences. They may be involved with basic or applied research. Many of these organizations provide information and resources to the general public.

The J. Paul Getty Institute <[http:// www.getty.edu](http://www.getty.edu)> features access to an extensive photo archive. Its digital collection features two million public domain reproductions available without charge to the public.

The Getty search engine provides easy access to images. Seek collections by photographers from your area. For instance, John K. "Jack" Hillers began taking photographs in 1871 and participated in many well-known expeditions through the early 20th century. During John Wesley Powell's 1872-1875 expedition to the west, Hillers took over 300 photos of the Southern Paiute Indians of Utah, Nevada, and Arizona. The result is an amazing documentation of the life and culture of the Southern Paiute people during this time. Show students historical photos of activities such as dancing and games. Teach children Native American and pioneer dances.

4.FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

From the United States Forest Service to the Centers for Disease Control, many federal government agencies house historical collections. The National Park Service is an example. The NPS Multimedia Search tool <<https://bit.ly/29ryXHu>> provides easy access to photos, videos, audio, and webcams from national parks, monuments, battlefields, military parks, historical parks, historic sites, lakeshores, seashores, recreation areas, scenic rivers and trails, and the White House. Additional resources can be accessed at individual sites.

Capitol Reef National Park runs across the center of Wayne County, Utah, and plays an important role in local history. The National Park Service multimedia database contains over 200 photos that include ancient artifacts and pioneer photographs. For instance, the collection contains a photograph of a bone awl used by ancient people in weaving. Show students photos of tools that people used long ago and have them brainstorm possible uses.

5.NONPROFIT LIBRARY PROJECTS

Some nonprofit groups are making public domain resources available to the general public. For instance, the Internet Archive project <<https://archive.org>> is a nonprofit library that contains 20 million books, images, and more. The vast majority of the resources are copyright free, so they can easily be woven into lessons and student projects. The images contained in public domain books are an overlooked treasure trove for developing activities related to cultural heritage.

Games of the North American Indians by Stewart Culin was published in 1907, so it's not likely to be found in your school library. However, it's a wonderful source for connecting youth with the games played by children centuries ago. Available through the Internet Archive, the book contains dozens of historical photos and line drawings. For instance, the Southern Paiute hoop and dart game involved bending a twig into a hoop and weaving a net of yucca fiber. The darts were made of hardwood and

feathers. Youth were asked to compare the drawings of Southern Paiute games with games that they play.

6. CONSORTIA

Through partnerships with universities, colleges, public libraries, museums, historical societies, and government agencies, many consortia have been established worldwide. For instance, Europeana <<https://www.europeana.eu/portal/en>> shares cultural heritage collections across European countries.

Within the United States, many regional consortia have emerged. The Digital Library of Appalachia <<https://dla.acaweb.org/>> provides online access to archival and historical materials related to the culture of the southern and central Appalachian region.

The Mountain West Digital Library <<https://mwdl.org>> contains nearly a million digital resources. It provides an easy-to-use portal to primary source materials including photographs. Of particular note is the Pioneers in Your Attic project that features resources from the overland migration of the 19th century.

7. STATE COLLECTIONS

Many states and provinces have developed digital collections that focus specifically on their people, places, and events. In many cases, local newspaper collections and family photo collections are available in addition to state government documents. These collections may be housed at the state archives; state library; or division of arts, humanities, or history website. In some cases, the state creates an alliance with a public university or nonprofit organization to house collections.

Also, seek statewide historical societies such as the Wisconsin Historical Society <<https://www.wisconsinhistory.org>>, Florida Memory <<https://www.floridamemory.com/>>, Ohio Memory

<<https://www.ohiomemory.org/>>, and Kansas Memory <<https://www.kansasmemory.org/>>. These collaborative projects focus on state-level primary sources.

Like many states, Utah's Online Library <<https://bit.ly/2zfRiG6>> provides links to key digital collections available through various agencies. These lists are useful starting points for seeking cultural heritage materials.

8. UNIVERSITY COLLECTIONS

Some of the richest digital collections are available through universities. Individuals often donate digital collections that are then scanned and made publicly available. For instance, the J. Willard Marriott Digital Library from the University of Utah contains over a million digital resources. It also houses materials from the Utah Department of Heritage and Arts.

The George Edward Anderson (1860-1928) Photo Collection <<https://bit.ly/2Zk6Eng>> at Brigham Young University contains over 14,000 photographs depicting people and places in Utah from the late 19th to the early 20th century. Students enjoy seeing photos of children in daily life. Use search terms such as "children" and "students" to locate images. Talk with children about what it would be like to milk dairy cows every morning before school and every evening after school.

9. PUBLIC LIBRARIES, HISTORICAL SOCIETIES, AND CULTURAL CENTERS

Most people are familiar with large public library digital collections such as the New York Public Library <<https://on.nypl.org/2hZJgdG>> and the Toronto Public Library <[https:// bit.ly/2sf5Sdh](https://bit.ly/2sf5Sdh)>. However, it can be difficult to locate century-old photographs taken in rural areas. Cameras were uncommon, and most photos were taken by traveling photographers. These professional photos were often taken with fake backdrops that don't reflect the local culture. Fortunately, these traveling photographers often took

photos in their own communities. These photos are often available through public libraries and local history centers.

For instance, the Uintah County Library Regional History Center <<https://bit.ly/2KKBpOh>> is filled with fascinating photographs. Through a relationship with the University of Utah, they've scanned hundreds of photos taken by Leo Thorne depicting everyday life in rural Utah more than a century ago.

Look for cultural centers that focus on the histories connected with particular ethnic, racial, or cultural groups. For instance, look for tribal groups at their official public websites such as the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah <[https:// www.utahpaiutes.org/](https://www.utahpaiutes.org/)> or the Navajo Nation <<http://www.navajo-nsn.gov/>>. Most of the pioneer families arriving in Utah in the late 19th century were members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Their Pioneer Database website <<https://bit.ly/2PhP6sa>> contains valuable historical information about the first pioneers, including photos and links to primary and secondary resources.

10. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

When exploring common cultural heritage themes, it's often easiest to find generic historical photos depicting people, places, events, or activities.

Once you know the breeds of chickens and cows that were brought to your area by pioneers, you can find illustrations from historical catalogs or books. These types of public domain photos are easily located at Wikimedia Commons <<https://bit.ly/YklbAF>>. For instance, Rhode Island Red, Plymouth Rock, and Wyandotte were popular with Utah pioneers. Create games that ask youth to choose which chickens and dairy cattle they'd buy for their 19th century farms.

11. GOOGLE SERVICES

Google provides a variety of useful services for developing cultural heritage programs. The Google Arts & Culture < <https://artsandculture.google.com/>> project maintains access to visual resources related to historical figures and events, places, digital collections, and place-based materials. Search for your state or province to find more local resources.

Google Images is an effective search tool to find generic, pioneer-era visuals such as how fields were plowed or what a sod house looks like.

Google's YouTube contains endless how-to videos to answer questions such as how do you make butter and how do you make a dreamcatcher?

Google's Patent Search provides information about key inventions. For instance, when did people shift from using straw bee skeps to reusable bee boxes for beekeeping? L. L. Langstroth's Beehive <<https://bit.ly/2ZnWaY4>> was patented in 1852. However, many earlier pioneers continued to use skeps for many years after this invention.

12. PERSONAL COLLECTIONS

Some of the most fascinating local photographs come from the grandparents and great grandparents of students.

Hold a local cultural heritage event at your school and offer scanning services. Or send out a call for historical photographs in the school's newsletter or Facebook page.

A photo of three boys fishing was submitted by a community member after seeing a Facebook post asking for local history submissions. The photo was taken in 1945 and shows three boys who were fishing for trout with their bare hands. The family photo was woven into an activity asking students about childhood clothing and activities.

CONCLUSION

Historical photos are an effective way to jumpstart conversations with students about local history and cultural heritage. While some photos may be available locally, web-based resources are useful in filling in the gaps.

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The Sparking Humanities project was made possible in part by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Entrada Institute.