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Archive Watch: Summer Doldrums Edition

By Jennifer Howard

The dog days of summer—it's been an especially oppressive season here in the nation's capital—have us thinking about air-conditioned museums and the cool, sunless stacks of libraries. Here are some cool digital archives or archive-related projects we've come across lately. If you can't make it to a museum, library, or archive in real life, cool off with some virtual browsing through one of these. Consider this an overture to the Society of American Archivists's annual meeting, which will be held here in Washington next week.

—The Churchill Archives Centre, at Churchill College, Cambridge, houses the great man's papers along with more than 570 collections "of personal papers and archives documenting the history of the Churchill era and after." It's supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, which makes us wonder how proposed cuts to arts-and-culture funding in Britain might affect projects like this.

—The English Broadside Ballad Archive, at the University of California at Santa Barbara, is your go-to spot for facsimiles and transcriptions of ballad broadsides. Popular in the first half of the 17th century, the ballad broadside was "a single large sheet of paper printed on one side (hence "broad-side") with multiple eye-catching illustrations, a popular tune title, and an alluring poem—the latter mostly in black-letter, or what we today call "gothic," type." The site features transcriptions, including a 1621 example of "The lamentable burning of the City of Corke (in the province of Munster in Ireland) by Lightning," to be sung to the tune of "Fortune My Foe." EBBA seeks to archive all 8,000 to 10,000 broadside ballads thought to survive from the period.

—Successful Strategic Deception: A Case Study, just published by the Scholarly Publishing Office at the University of Michigan Library, pulls together, analyzes, and links to archival materials that, author Stephen W. Salant argues, support Alger Hiss's claim that key documents used against him had been forged. Mr. Salant is a professor of economics at the university. His analysis "documents for the first time that the chief investigator hired by Hiss's attorneys to help prepare Hiss's libel suit was in fact an undercover Army spy-catcher," according to a press release from the SPO.

—Vietnam Online, part of WGBH's Media Library and Archives, makes available the original materials—including interviews with Henry Kissinger, John Kerry, and many other participants—used in WGBH's 1983 series "Vietnam: A Televison History." The result of a two-year collaboration between WGBH and the University of Massachusetts at Boston, and Columbia University's Center for New Media Teaching and Learning, the project involved transferring the original images from film stock. In a press release

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announcing the archive, WGBH said Vietnam Online "will serve as a model for future digital media archives drawing from assets from public television and similar sources."

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