

# Using Digital Archives as Classroom Resources

Craig Roland

**D**igital archives are an important means of preserving historical and cultural materials for educational and scholarly use. These online repositories generally consist of large collections of raw, uncontextualized audio, visual, and text materials stored in various digital formats. Art teachers can use the materials available, especially digitized images, to engage students in critical analysis and inquiry-based activities that provoke a range of imaginative and well-reasoned responses. Students can download text, images, videos, and animations for their classroom research projects and multimedia presentations.

## American Memory [memory.loc.gov](http://memory.loc.gov)

The American Memory Project from the U.S. Library of Congress offers a wealth of primary source materials relating to the history and culture of the United States. The site includes more than seven million digitized items from more than one hundred historical collections covering a broad range of subjects and themes. The Learning Page contains lesson plans plus tips on how to use the collections in the classroom.

## Archives of American Art [www.aaa.si.edu](http://www.aaa.si.edu)

The Archives of American Art in Washington, DC, houses the largest collection of documents on the history of the visual arts in the United States. Although their Web site covers only a small portion of the actual collection, it is a great place to explore and learn about the history of American art. The types of materials you can find here include digital reproductions of artists' letters and diaries, sketches and

sketchbooks, photographs, exhibition catalogs, artist scrapbooks, and transcripts of artist interviews.

## Cushman Photograph Collection [webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/cushman/](http://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/cushman/)

Sponsored by the Indiana Digital Library Program, this archive includes over 14,000 color images of everyday life in the middle of the twentieth century, taken by photographer Charles Weever Cushman. Cushman's images document a wide range of American and international subjects, from city storefronts and industrial landscapes to candid portraits and botanical studies.

## Collected Visions [www.collectedvisions.net](http://www.collectedvisions.net)

This participatory Web site explores the relationship between family photographs and memory. Visitors can easily search the growing database of more than 2,500 family snapshots, create a photo essay, read essays written by others, and submit their own family photos or essays for possible exhibition on the site.

## Great Buildings Online [www.greatbuildings.com](http://www.greatbuildings.com)

This site offers instant access to the world of architecture, past and present. It includes over 800 images of buildings around the world, biographies on hundreds of architects, online 3-D models of buildings, photographic images, architectural drawings, and more.

## National Archives Exhibit Hall [www.archives.gov/exhibits](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits)

The National Archives in Washington DC, presents a number of online exhibits on their Web site that cover a variety of historical subjects. A few of the exhibits that might inter-




[www.collectedvisions.net](http://www.collectedvisions.net)

est art teachers and students are "Powers of Persuasion—Posters from World War II," "A New Deal for the Arts," which includes artwork and photographs highlighting Depression-era arts projects, and "Picturing the Century," which features twentieth-century photographs and photographers.

## NY Public Library Digital Gallery [digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital](http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital)

This award-winning site provides access to over 450,000 digitized images covering a broad range of primary source and printed materials such as illuminated manuscripts, historical maps, vintage posters, rare photographs, ephemera, and more. You can use the keyword and advanced search option to find specific items, or browse the collections using the topical directory.

## September 11 Digital Archive [911digitalarchive.org](http://911digitalarchive.org)

The September 11 Digital Archive contains more than 135,000 items in a variety of media formats, enabling visitors to examine a wide spectrum of opinions and perspectives regarding the events of 9/11. Warning: Some of the images and content on this site may not be suitable for young viewers. 

*Craig Roland is an associate professor of Art Education in the School of Art and Art History at the University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida. He is the author of The Art Teacher's Guide to the Internet (Davis Publications, 2005). [rolandc@ufl.edu](mailto:rolandc@ufl.edu)*