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10-17-2019

Celebrating Open Access at University of Dayton

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CRRA Supports Open Access

Research portal, Catholic News Archive among resources freely available worldwide

Each year, Open Access Week calls attention to efforts worldwide to make scholarly literature, research data, creative works, primary sources and other materials available to anyone online, free of charge.

Kathleen Webb, dean of the University of Dayton Libraries, places a high value on information accessibility and ushered her libraries into the open-access realm with the 2013 launch of eCommons, an institutional repository showcasing the research and creative works of the faculty, staff and students of the University of Dayton. Since 2013, the UD Libraries have made more than 35,000 articles, papers, historical collections, rare materials and records available. Webb demonstrates this same commitment in her service on the board of directors of the Catholic Research Resources Alliance, a North American consortium devoted to providing enduring global access to Catholic research resources in the Americas.

Since the CRRA's founding in 2008, the alliance and its members and partners — 50 across the United States and Canada — have devoted themselves to providing access to rare, unique and uncommon Catholic research materials held by libraries and archives across North America. In celebration of Open Access Week Oct. 21-27, Webb highlights four CRRA assets of great value not just to Catholic institutions' academic programs and research priorities, but to researchers worldwide.

CATHOLIC NEWS ARCHIVE

Newspapers, often referred to as the "first draft of history," provide researchers with objective coverage of current events as well as editorial commentary on the issues of the day. In order to provide enduring global access to these rich but rapidly deteriorating resources, the CRRA undertook an ambitious project in 2011: digitizing content from Catholic newspapers and the Catholic News Service and making it freely available in a searchable database. This collection fills a gap in digital newspaper collections and ensures scholars will have online access to reporting about Catholics, who have long been influential in shaping American society. Though still far from complete, the Catholic News Archive now contains almost 20,000 issues (about half a million pages) from 13 publications from 1831 to 2016, providing information not just from a historical perspective, but also through cultural, political and social lenses. To build the archive, CRRA members and partners provide digital assets as they become available; the project also received financial support from the Catholic Communications Campaign of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

About 5,000 visitors on average each month are using the Catholic News Archive, with readership growing steadily. In 2019, users in a typical month have viewed about 25,000 pages.

CATHOLIC PORTAL

[This tool](#) provides digital access to Catholic scholarly resources — including many from the Marian Library and the U.S. Catholic Special Collection at the University of Dayton — in the following areas:

- Catholic education
- Catholic intellectual life
- Catholic literary figures
- Catholic liturgy and devotion
- Catholic missions
- Catholic social action
- Diocesan collections
- Peace building
- Religion and citizenship
- Religious orders
- Vatican II

CRRRA collections chair Stephanie Shreffler, an assistant professor and collections librarian/archivist in the University of Dayton Libraries, explains how to use the portal an audio introduction on the portal's [Content and Scope](#) page.

SUBJECT GUIDES

These [research guides](#), many of them created by Ted Bergfelt of Duquesne University's Gumberg Library, provide background and definitions on a subject, along with links to useful resources from not just the CRRRA digital collections, but also outside sources such as the Vatican and nonprofit organizations. As of Open Access Week 2019, the directory contained 32 subject guides. Some examples: African-American Catholics; Catholic Missions in North America; Parish Histories; Peace Building; and Vatican II.

REFERENCES TO GREAT RESOURCES

While CRRRA provides access to a wide variety of materials, it's hard to be comprehensive on a shoestring budget. Being an organization of scholars, librarians and archivists, the CRRRA knows great resources when it sees them; Exhibit A is "Catholic Resources in Digital Form," an online list with links to sites likely to appeal to people conducting research on a wide variety of Catholic topics. See <https://www.catholicresearch.org/catholic-resources-in-digital-form>

— Maureen Schlangen, University of Dayton