



Chicago Collections Consortium  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **EXPLORE CHICAGO COLLECTIONS RELEASED TO THE PUBLIC**

***New online portal unites region's many archival collections,  
empowering scholars and students with greater access to Chicago history***

**Chicago, IL (October 22, 2015)** - Chicago Collections is proud to announce the launch of its flagship initiative, Explore Chicago Collections—a free, centralized, web-based search engine and record-finding tool that will allow researchers, teachers, students, and the general public to locate or access over 100,000 maps, photos, letters, and other archival materials held at its member institutions. These twenty-one members include the likes of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago History Museum, the Newberry Library, and others such as Alliance Française de Chicago, and the Chicago Zoological Society. Rather than negotiate traditional online boundaries between these institutions, users will be able to browse an enormous wealth of digital material (as well as guides for locating physical objects related to Chicago history) by topic, neighborhood, city, and more. Additional resources available through the Explore Chicago Collections site ([explore.chicagocollections.org](http://explore.chicagocollections.org)) will include library guides, a virtual reference desk, educational materials, and eventually, digital exhibits, and more. The free and unfettered access to Chicago history and culture that Explore Chicago Collections affords is unprecedented.

A \$194,000 grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation was awarded to the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Library, which has led the development of the website in partnership with Chicago Collections. "Explore Chicago Collections, through the power of technology and the research expertise of librarians and archivists across the Chicago region, will greatly enhance the digital research environment," said David Spadafora, President of the Newberry Library and Chair of the Board of Chicago Collections. "The portal unites the archives of several premier cultural institutions, creating a space within which users may make cross-institutional connections that were impossible before. We are very grateful to The Mellon Foundation for making it possible for us to tangibly connect the past and present and promote scholarship and learning."

The venture promises to benefit knowledge-seekers beyond the academic and geographic boundaries of Chicago, empowering anyone with an interest in Chicago's historical development with the ability to more fully investigate the primary sources documenting that development. "Explore Chicago Collections will permit users to discover historical resources in ways that are nearly impossible today—resources that are not meant to be contained, and that belong to all of us," remarked Jaclyn Grahl, Chicago Collections Executive Director.

Chicago Collections, in collaboration with Chicago Public Library, made its public debut earlier this year with the opening of its inaugural exhibition, *Raw Material: Uncovering Chicago's Historical Collections*, on display through November 15, 2015, in the Special Collections Exhibition Hall, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor, at the Harold Washington Library Center, 400 S. State Street. The free exhibition includes a selection of notable archives, manuscripts, and objects pulled from over 20 archival repositories across the region. It is supported in part by an anonymous donor and the Gladys Kriebel Delmas Foundation. Beyond the Raw Material exhibition and the Explore website, Chicago Collections looks forward to creating many other meaningful collaborations offering access and exciting learning opportunities to all.



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### **About Chicago Collections**

Chicago Collections is a consortium of libraries, museums, and other institutions that collaborate to preserve, celebrate, and share the archival collections of Chicago's rich history and culture, and believes the region's heritage should be available for everyone to explore—freely, easily, and openly.

Member institutions include: Alliance Française de Chicago, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago History Museum, Chicago Public Library, Chicago State University, Chicago Zoological Society, Columbia College Chicago, DePaul University, The Ernest Hemingway Foundation of Oak Park, Illinois Institute of Technology, Lake Forest College, Loyola University Chicago, Newberry Library, Northern Illinois University, Northwestern University, Oak Park Public Library, Roosevelt University, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Theatre Historical Society of America, University of Chicago, and University of Illinois at Chicago.

Chicago Collections is grateful to an anonymous donor and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for their support in the formation of this organization. For more information, go to [chicagocollections.org](http://chicagocollections.org), follow us on Twitter (@ChiCollections, #TogetherChicago), or "Like" us on Facebook ([facebook.com/ChiCollections](https://facebook.com/ChiCollections)).

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