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#ColorOurCollections

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[#ColorOurCollections](#) is a website and social media-driven international “coloring festival” hosted by the New York Academy of Medicine Library. Each year, libraries, museums, and archives are invited to develop and share free digital coloring books (PDF files) that highlight public domain works from their collections. The festival has occurred annually the first week of February since 2016 and to date, over six hundred coloring books by more than three hundred participating institutions are available on the [#ColorOurCollections](#) website.

Coloring books typically feature five to ten black-and-white images alongside brief information about the participating institution. Institutions are responsible for creating their own books, and a template and instructions for converting images with Photoshop or Gimp (a free image editing tool) are provided. Institutions then register and submit their coloring books to [#ColorOurCollections](#) in advance of the festival dates. The coloring books are likely to appeal to a broad audience, and collectively, they feature works representing a range of artistic styles, subjects, creation dates, and cultures. All users need to download them is an internet-connected device and commonplace PDF reader software; the pages can then be printed for coloring.

The [#ColorOurCollections](#) homepage features a tiled layout of recently contributed coloring books. Additional coloring books are found via a sidebar that appears on all other pages but the homepage. This sidebar lists all participating institutions (past and present) and clicking on an institution name reveals tiles for the coloring books they have contributed. Each tile opens a page that contains a preview of a coloring book, a link to download the PDF and more information about the institution. In comparison, the lists found under the “Participating Institutions” tab in the main navigation bar lead to institutions’ websites and social media accounts, but not to their coloring books.

A small magnifying glass icon layered on top of the website header opens a search bar (also layered on top of the header). This layering may pose a challenge for visually impaired website users. The search

itself works well and is useful for locating content based on keywords such as medium, location, and institution name, and could be made even better through redesign to be more visually accessible.

Given the impressive breadth of both participating institutions and coloring book content, additional discovery options would be beneficial. It would be fascinating to see institutions overlaid on an interactive world map, enabling one to download coloring books by location. In addition, a tag cloud located at the bottom of the navigational sidebar provides a helpful way to explore coloring books by subject and could be given a more prominent location.

#ColorOurCollections is well-designed for social media integration. It is easy to grab unique, stable URLs to specific coloring books that can be shared in any number of ways. Institutions and individuals alike can use the provided promotional graphics and the #colorourcollections hashtag to spread the word about the festival and engage with other participants.

Institutions may wish to participate in #ColorOurCollections to promote awareness of and encourage interaction with their collections—for their immediate communities and beyond. The festival provides an exciting opportunity to broadly educate about the creative reuse potential of public domain works. Institutions could also develop complimentary virtual or in-person programs (such as coloring parties) that use the #ColorOurCollections content regardless of whether they are official participants. And the website itself offers a rich trove of free content to anyone who enjoys coloring, accessible anytime. In sum, #ColorOurCollections offers a fresh way to highlight cultural heritage collections with the flexibility and wide reach of virtual engagement.