Fashion Photography Archive

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The Fashion Photography Archive (FPA) is a database from Bloomsbury Fashion Central. FPA's collection focuses on fashion from the late 1970's through 2000. It is curated by Dr. Valerie Steele, Director of the Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology. Bloomsbury's more established fashion products, Berg Fashion Library and Fairchild Books, are staple resources for many schools offering fashion and design programs. FPA is available as an annual subscription or with perpetual access and cost is determined by size of institution.

FPA contains hundreds of thousands of images with more to be added in phases. FPA plans to have a total of 750,000 viewable images in its final collection. The archive contains photographs from well-known fashion designers and houses that include images of couture fashion shows, garments, and supermodels. Other contents of the database include images of garments with descriptions, scholarly articles, biographies of designers, teaching aids, and videos. No special software is required for viewing FPA but using a high resolution screen would enhance the experience of viewing images and photographs.

Those familiar with Berg's interface will find FPA easy to use because of the shared platform. Both products are cross-searchable on the Bloomsbury Fashion Central platform. Because FPA is a visual resource, the landing page is dominated by brightly colored images and links. The large images and concise categories make the interface easy to navigate. The tabs at the top are limited and clearly marked. The search box is located at the top of the screen under the tabs in a gray header. To narrow results, users can conduct an advanced search which is located

beside the search box. Users have the option to adjust the size of the text on the page.

If users want to "browse" instead of performing a search, the display offers several options.
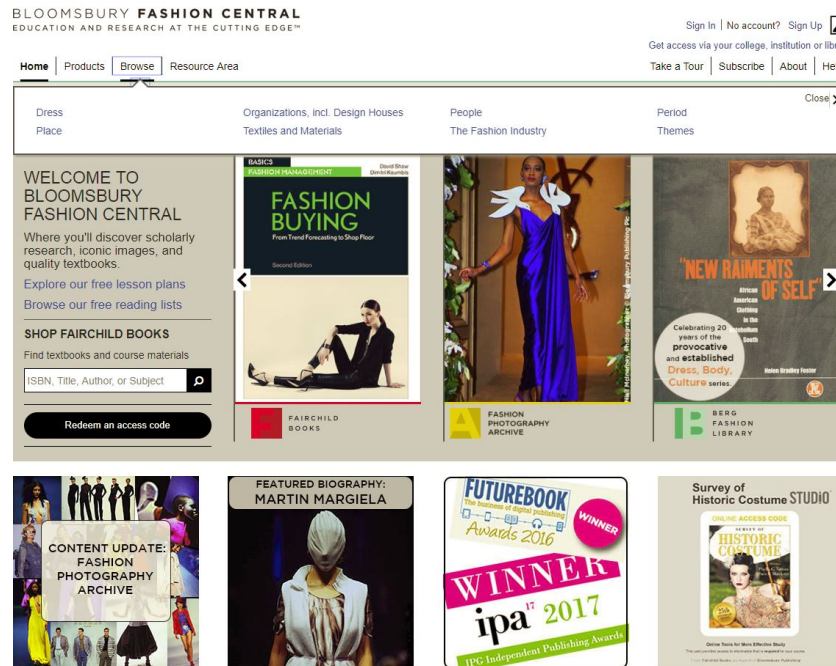
Again, the text does not overwhelm the page but the topics are broad enough to give a brief overview of the categories contained in FPA.

FPA's design is highly interactive with unique features for not only designers but fashion historians. One of these tools is the "timeline." The timeline shows a pictorial history of fashion. Users can hover over a year or decade and see the fashions designed at that time, use the mouse to scan over the timeline and see a brief description about the picture, and narrow by category.
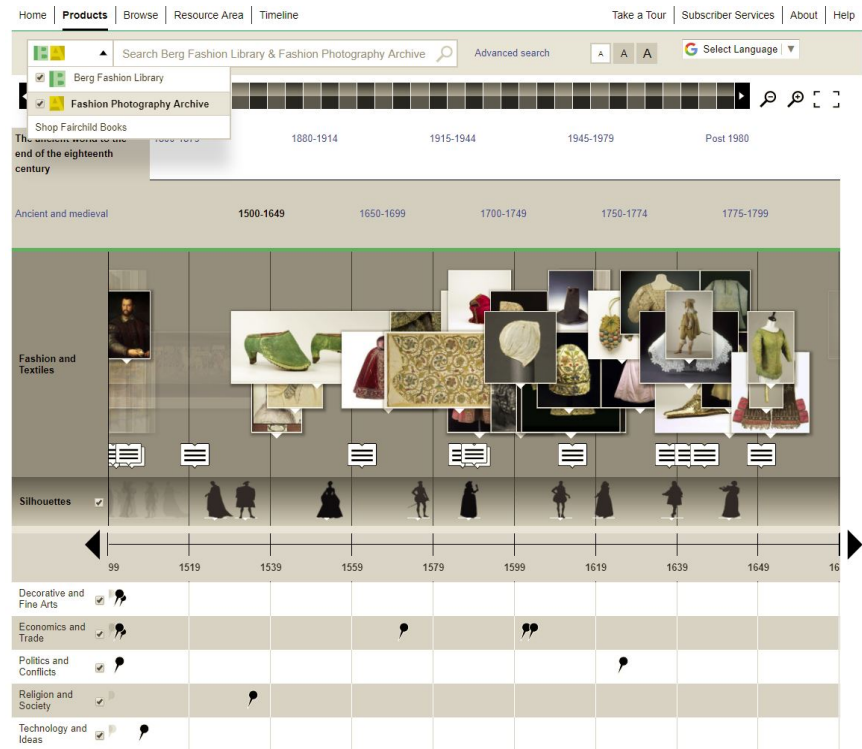
FPA has designed its results page with customizable facets on the side of the page to resemble web discovery tools. The "filter by" box contains categories such as time period, organizations, textiles and materials, and people. FPA also allows users to save their searched items in a folder by creating a personalized account, but it is not necessary to create an account to search the content. These features will feel familiar and standard to seasoned researcher familiar with academic databases.

The content of the FPA is comprehensive. The designers, collections, and images are instantly recognizable and as Bloomsbury describes, "iconic." FPA's interactiveness and focused content make it unique. Instead of attempting to cover many topics, FPA is narrow in its breadth of content, thus, making much of the exclusive content, outstanding visually, and in subject matter. FPA does not replace the experience of seeing items or attending a fashion show in person, however, the use of high-quality images with magnification tools and videos makes it a good alternative.