

## **Multimedia & Technology Reviews**

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## **American Watercolors**

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American Watercolors is a free research portal for the study of American watercolors created by the Philadelphia Museum of Art (PMA). Produced in conjunction with the physical exhibition American Watercolor in the Age of Homer and Sargent and its accompanying catalogue by Kathleen A. Foster

(2017), the site is one of ten LibGuides at the museum library and provides resources on seven watercolor societies active from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in New York City and Philadelphia.

The site is a comprehensive and well-organized repository for its subject. It is discoverable via a simple Google search. The overall quality is high, as exemplified by its clean layout, as well as its concise and clearly described navigation system. The user can use the tabs for each society, or browse the listing in the homepage body that shows the time periods of the societies' catalogues. Bibliographic information about the exhibition catalogue by Kathleen Foster is also conveniently located on the homepage and includes a link to WorldCat, allowing the user to find the item in their nearby library. Additional resources are available as well, including the PDFs of the chronology of American Watercolor Movement and other full publications about the materials and techniques of watercolors.

When the user clicks on any specific society's page via one of the tabs at the top of the guide, they will find the content coherent and intuitive to use, thanks to its consistent structure throughout the site. Each society's page opens with a brief overview of the history and contents of the catalogues. Links to catalogues are found on the right side of the page; when the user selects a catalogue from a specific year, they will be prompted to an external site - the Internet Archive. In addition to the catalogues, other resources are available. The American Watercolor Society page boasts the most extensive resources, as it features the chronology of American

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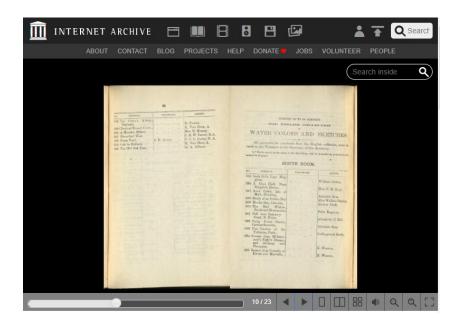


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Water Movement, which is an appendix from Foster's book. Member List PDFs can also be found in the American Watercolor Society and New York Water Color Society pages. PDFs of the Annual Exhibition Record, sorted by either artist or owner, are available in the American Watercolor Society, Boston Water Color Society, and Boston Color Club pages. Besides the PDFs, the site provides Microsoft Excel files for the Analytic Chart of Exhibitions (sorted by year, number of entries, number of artists, percentage of women artists) and the Index of Artists (an alphabetical list of artists with their biographical data, and cataloging of all works exhibited) for all societies, with the exception of the New York Water Color Society. The users can download these lists and make use of them on their own devices.



In the Internet Archive, the user can continue to freely access the descriptive metadata, much of which is hyperlinked for further browsing. The only time the user is required to log in with a free account is when they want to add a review of any catalogue on the Internet Archive. The Internet Archive interface has various interactive features for the user including image enlargement, "favoriting" a selected catalogue, sharing it on social media, via email, or embedding the HTML on other sites, and flagging the item. There are abundant download options available for users.



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American Watercolors is especially suitable for art historians, curators, visual art students and faculty, K-12 school art teachers, and interested researchers. It is highly versatile because of its placement within the museum's website. The user can expand their search beyond this LibGuide to other guides created by the library through breadcrumb navigation. While other art museums have online collections of American watercolors, such as the Smithsonian American Art Museum Watercolor and the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, the PMA's LibGuide provides a more centralized, structured, and methodical way for the user through the portal's search capacity. In sum, with the strategic design and effective use of the platform, the portal offers excellent and unique resources for users to enjoy.