

International Costumer

Volume XX Issue 5

Sept-Oct 2021



Thomas Rowlandson & Augustus Charles Pugin, *The Exhibition Room at Somerset House*.
Engraving published in *Microcosm of London*, 1808. [Wikipedia](#)

Special Issue: The New ICG Archives Online Image Gallery

From the President's Desk

Kevin Roche

Ours is an intensely visual art form, and one that is also far too often ephemeral -- especially its performance aspect. For this reason, I believe that the ICG Archives are one of the most significant and important projects of the International Costumers' Guild, as well as one of its greatest assets. The ICG Gallery, the Archives' public face, is one of our most visible interfaces to the outside world, and accessible internationally.

As one of the people who helped configure and build the second incarnation of the Costume-Con Visual Archives, I understood first-hand how problematic it was when the original Gallery software (used by both the ICG Gallery and the CC Visual Archives) stopped being supported.

The volunteers maintaining both (yours truly included) made valiant efforts to keep the installations running, but eventually no amount of chewing gum and baling wire could keep it working without leaving the

website(s) with serious security exposures, and we had to shut it down.

The sheer number of visual assets made finding a replacement solution an enormous challenge, especially for the ICG Archives. Fortunately, ICG member (and current VP) Leslie Johnston was able to bring her professional skills and experience to bear on the problem, and as a result, we have a beautiful new ICG Gallery that is not only secure and stable, but can be scaled up as we expand the assets we want to share with the world.

This was a tremendous accomplishment, and I presented Leslie with the 2021 ICG President's Award during the virtual Costume-Con33 event in late April for her fabulous gift to the Guild and on behalf of our art.

This special edition of the International Costumer is celebrates Leslie's work as she shares with you more details on the new Gallery and its future.

Thank you again, Leslie!

Guest Editor's Letter

Philip Gust

This special issue is dedicated to a report from Leslie Johnston on the ICG Archive's new ICG Gallery. Leslie identified a software package used by professional archivists, implemented the package, and transferred the content and metadata from our original ICG Gallery software that became obsolete and no longer ran.

This new package also enabled Leslie to store images at much higher resolution than was possible with the original Gallery. Now Leslie has taken on the role of ICG Gallery Webmaster, and is planning for the rapid growth of the Gallery as the Archives accelerates its work digitizing and archiving new content, and also preparing exhibits.

The ICG and the costuming community owe Leslie our sincere appreciation for lending her expertise in the field of digital preservation and for her work on this project. Thanks to her, the ICG Archives will be able to preserve and exhibit our costuming history for years to come.

The New ICG Archives Online Image Gallery

Leslie L. Johnston

The Pat and Peggy Kenny Memorial Archives of the ICG is one of its hidden gems: over 100,000 images of costumes and events that preserves the history of Science Fiction fan costuming. Since the mid-1980s, the Archive and its archivists—Pierre Pettinger, Bruce Mai, and Nora Mai—have gathered materials spanning several decades.

In addition, it has accumulated images from wearable arts and living history events, and other showcases for creativity. Much of this collection has never been seen by a wide audience, not even ICG members. The mission of the Archives is not just preserving this history, but also one of access and education, to be the major destination for the celebration of craftsmanship, imagination and knowledge that our hobby encompasses.

Some History

The ICG Archives embraced the web and digitized images in 2007 when it

launched the online collections, which were built on top of the Gallery2 software, an open-source photo album organizer. This allowed the archivists to digitize photos from the core Archives collections, accept donations of digitized images from the community, and work with costumers to digitize their photos to add to the collections.

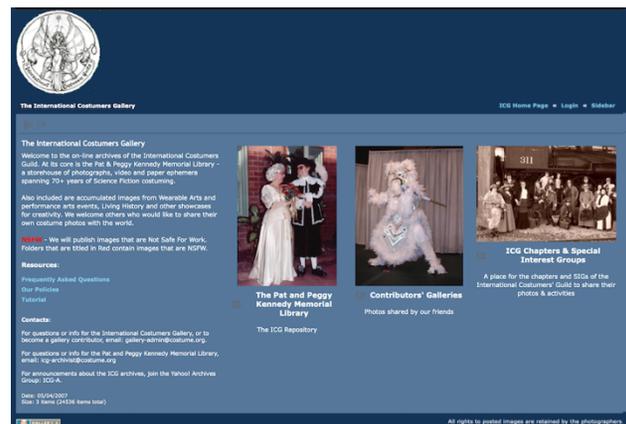
The original Gallery software worked well, although it was meant for generic photo management, not a costume photo archive: it required custom metadata extensions (descriptions of the costumes) and web page code. Unfortunately, in fall 2017 the software

reached a point where it could not keep up with current system infrastructure requirements for server security, so the system was shut down.

The loss of the public web interface did not mean that the archivists slowed down! They continued to acquire, digitize, and describe images for the day that the Gallery would come back.

In 2018/2019, I worked with Phil Gust to look at options for new software, as well as looking at what we had in terms of images and costume descriptions from the original system. We had all the images that were in the system at the time of its demise, and a backup of the underlying database (Thanks, Phil!). The database was a complicated one with over 50 separate tables, but we were able to restore the backup into a clean MySQL database, and write a script (many thanks to Charles Carroll for the assistance) to join and extract the records. We could use this to test new software options.

In my day job, I work as the director of digital preservation for the U.S. National Archives. I've worked with



Home page of original ICG Gallery (via [Internet Archives](#) [Wayback Machine](#)).

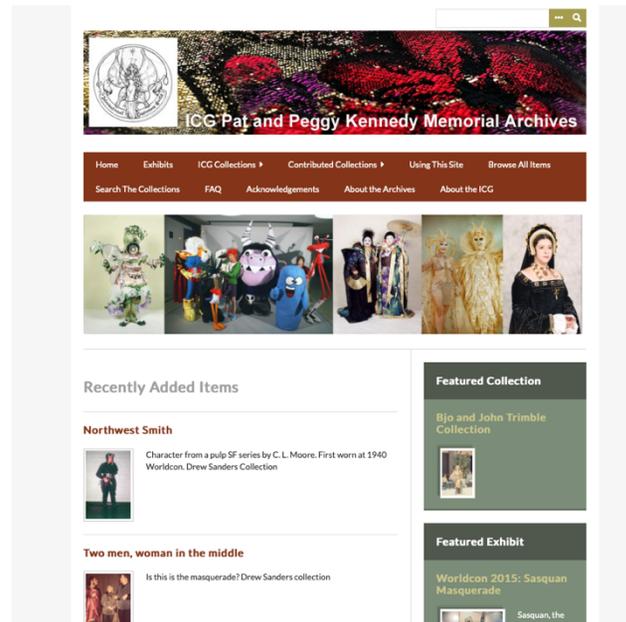
digitized and born-digital collections since the 1980s, so I was familiar with several different possible products and volunteered to work with this. The requirements the archivists identified were:

- Free, open-source software that is easy to customize and maintain;
- The ability to easily customize the underlying data structure and the look and feel of the web interface;
- The ability to create collections for specific costumers or events;
- The ability batch load images and batch update costume descriptions;
- The ability to handle other types of media, such as video or audio; and
- The ability to build thematic exhibits to highlight parts of the collection.

Phil and I looked at several products, eventually deciding on Omeka Classic (<https://omeka.org/classic/>). Omeka is an open-source product developed by the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media at George Mason University. It is used extensively by

archives and libraries internationally, is actively supported, and has a large community of software developers who contribute to the project and continue expanding its features.

Most importantly, it supports the key requirements for the archivists: it supports collections and sub-collections; has multiple customizable interface designs and the ability to create costume-specific descriptions; supports batch loading and updating; can handle multiple additional media



Home page of new ICG Gallery

formats, including video, audio, and text documents; and has an interface for building exhibits.

Another bonus for me as webmaster is that there are web hosting companies that specialize in hosting Omeka that will handle all software updates and security maintenance automatically. Since the selection of the hosting company (Reclaim Hosting) there have been two new versions of Omeka which has been installed seamlessly and kept all customizations of the site.

Using a database stored procedure (an automated script), I extracted the original Gallery records into a CSV (comma separated value) text file, and Phil retrieved the images from the original server. I split the records into smaller sets that could be loaded into collections in Omeka. Omeka uses an archival/library standard for metadata (called Dublin Core, after the location of the meeting where it was developed), and it was easy to map the current existing records to the new system and create a new type of digital

object—a costume image—that tracks information not used in the general archival community: competition division (young fan, novice, journeyman, master, etc.), maker (as opposed to designer), costume types (original, recreation, historical), entry number, and awards.

Omeka makes all this very easy to do! It has a very clean administrative interface, whether it's looking at a snapshot of the system, customizing the interface, batch loading images, or building exhibits.

Remember I said that the archivists had continued to work while the system was down? They were, and we met in Summer 2020 for the first inaugural mini ArchiveCon to review what we'd all been doing and finalize the decisions about the system. All the great work that they'd been doing to inventory the collections meant that there were updated records that described what was in the original Gallery, and thousands more images!

Monitors are better, users expect larger image files, and space limitations are

The screenshot shows the Omeka administrative dashboard for 'ICG Pat and Peggy Kennedy Memorial Archives'. The dashboard includes a sidebar with navigation options like Dashboard, Items, Collections, Item Types, Tags, Exhibits, Simple Pages, Dropbox, Admin Images, Guest Users, Comments, Import, Simple Vocab, Manager elements, Job Diagnostics, Bulk Editor, Batch Upload, and Collection Tree. The main content area displays a 'Dashboard' with statistics: 14296 Items, 38 Collections, 365 Tags, 16 Plugins, 5 Users, Emiglio Theme, and 13 Exhibits. Below the statistics are two sections: 'Recent Items' and 'Recent Collections', each with a table of items and a green 'Add a new item/collection' button.

Internal administrative dashboard.

The screenshot shows the 'Browse Items (171 total)' page in the Omeka administrative interface. It features a search bar with the query 'Creator contains "Leslie Johnston"'. Below the search bar are buttons for 'Add an item', 'Show Details', 'Search Items', and 'Quick Filter'. The main area displays a table of 171 results, with the first few items visible: 'The Wife of the Ambassador of Earth', 'Fuschia and Steerpike', 'Victorian Secret', and 'Mourning Becomes Her'. Each item has a checkbox, a thumbnail, a title, a creator, a type, and a date added.

Reviewing and editing items in administrative interface.

The screenshot shows the 'Batch Uploader | Input Data' form in the Omeka administrative interface. It includes a 'User Header?' section, an 'Input File' section with a file upload button, and an 'Apply Mappings' section with a dropdown menu. Below these sections is a table for mapping properties, with columns for 'Original', 'Example', 'Property', and 'HTML'. The table contains rows for 'Inventory Code', 'File', 'Item Type', and 'Event'. To the right of the table are buttons for 'Next Step', 'Cancel and Return', and 'Delete', along with a 'Random' button and a 'Navigate Examples (1/76)' section.

Batch uploading images/descriptions in administrative interface.

less of an issue now. This led us to slowly come to a decision: we would not load the original data and images from the original Gallery, but would load the updated descriptions and the larger images.

Because Omeka is easy to update, this pivot was pretty easy. The data mappings and batch upload process were quick to update to match the inventories created by the archivists. The collections created during the first phase were re-used. The layout did not require any changes. A new process was put into place where the entire team switched to using a shared Google Drive, which is included in the ICG's Google suite. This made the process of collaboration much easier.

After re-loading over 10,000 images and creating some inaugural exhibits—Costuming in the 1960s, Costume-Con 1, and Worldcon 2015—we launched on April 1, 2021. Why April Fool's Day? Because people thought we'd never come back, so it seemed appropriate that people still might not believe it on launch day!

Using the Gallery

There are several ways to use the Gallery. When you are on the home page (<https://gallery.costume.org/>) you will see drop-down menus for “Exhibits,” “ICG Collections,” and “Contributor Collections.” There is also a simple Search box at the top right, and the menu item “Search the Collections” for advanced search.

The “Exhibits” are curated sets of images that reflect events, time periods, of genres of costumes. You can select an exhibit from the list, and navigate through the pages of images and text in each. The archivists are working to gradually create exhibits that document specific conventions, and recreate the run order of masquerades where we have the information. There are currently nine exhibits: Costume-Con 1, Costuming in the 1960s, and recreations of the run order of the Fantasy and Science Fictions masquerades at Worldcons from 2009 and 2011-2015. There are a lot of proposed exhibits to come!

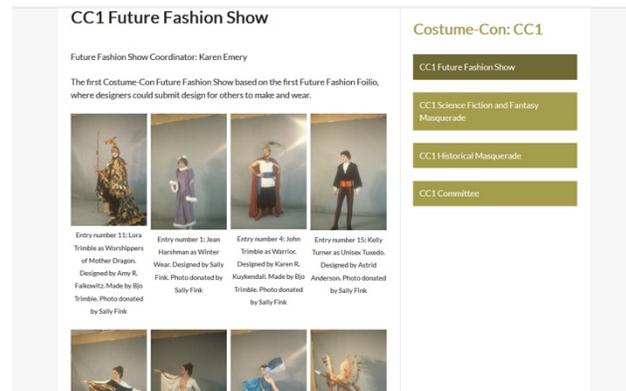
The “ICG Collections” are (mostly) official masquerade photos gathered

by the archivists. This is where you can browse the core image collections by event – some of them are very large events and are broken up by decades. The “Contributed Collections” are pictures donated by the people who took the photos themselves or come from the costumers themselves, which

are displayed in original order only. These are great options for browsing through events or the work of a specific costumer. Choose a Collection from the drop-down menu or the Collections page to browse what’s currently included; as more image are added, the collections will grow.

If you want to find a particular image or event that we have not created an exhibit for yet, (or you just don’t want to browse through 200+ pages of photos), we suggest using the “Search the Collections” drop-down menu. Use the simple search on the home page or the Keyword on the Search page for very general searches. For instance, at this moment, typing in “Snow Queen” in the Keyword field returns 37 results from across the site. This is also the best way to find every image from every instance of a con, such as Worldcon. Keep in mind that general searches like these might give you very large sets of results.

You can narrow down your search to filter results in or out using the specific fields, AKA advanced search on the “Search the Collections” page. For the



Part of Costume-Con 1 exhibit in the Gallery.



Browsing the Carol and Mike Resnick collection in the Gallery.

best results, if you are looking for images from a specific year or costume title, when you choose the Date or Title field, set the “operator” (type of search) to “Contains.” The descriptions that come with the images are pretty variable, so a Date for an image might be “1969” or “August 28-September 1, 1969.” You can also specify that a field “Does Not Contain” a value or “Is Empty” to help filter out records.

One other note about searching: while the archivists can frequently identify the Subject—who is in the image—they don't always know for certain who the Creator of the costume is (the designer), and less often who definitively made the costume, because the archivists don't want to make assumptions. You'll have your best luck searching for people's names in the Subject field with the Contains operator, or a simple keyword search.

Whether you're browsing collections or looking at search results, you will see a list of photo thumbnails with titles. Clicking that thumbnail will take you to the description of the image. On the upper right of that page, you will

Advanced/fielded search in the Gallery.

see the thumbnail again. Clicking the thumbnail will open a larger image you can zoom in on.

So, What's Next?

The archivists are constantly inventorying and digitizing the collections, so there are literally tens of thousands of images to describe and load. Inventorying and digitization take some time, but progress is happening! The second annual ArchiveCon was held in summer 2021, where we worked on documentation for the use of the system, brainstormed a tone of ideas, and did a test run of an oral history with a costumer and her photos in the collections. And the archivists agreed on several ideas for exhibitions.

There's some technical work planned behind the scenes to take advantage of flexible Amazon Cloud storage space, because if everyone who has contacted the archives about sharing their images sends what they have, the collection could grow to 400,000 images.

Do you see some images with missing or inaccurate descriptions? Tell us! Do you have a suggestion for an online exhibit? We'd love to hear what you're interested in! Would you like to share your images with the Archive? Contact us to start a conversation. Our email is icg-archivist@costume.org, and the ICG Gallery Facebook group is at <https://www.facebook.com/The-International-Costumers-Gallery-237722405911>. We look forward to hearing from you!



The ICG Archives team at ArchiveCon 2021.

About the ICG

Membership Benefits

ICG membership benefits include participation in local Chapters and in Special Interest Groups, voting rights, eligibility for grants, online forums, learning and volunteer opportunities, and the *International Costumer*.

ICG Online

ICG website: <http://www.costume.org/>

ICG Facebook group:

<https://www.facebook.com/internationalcostumers>

ICG Gallery

<https://gallery.costume.org/>

Members-only Google discussion group:

<https://groups.google.com/a/costume.org/g/cos-chat>

ICG Board meeting Google group:

<http://groups.google.com/u/6/a/board.costume.org/g/meeting>

Use Amazon Smile to support the ICG:

<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/52-1656188>

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The Pat and Peggy Kennedy Memorial Archives

The Pat and Peggy Kennedy Memorial

Archives is the largest existing collection of photographs, video and paper ephemera record of the costuming art in relation to Science Fiction conventions, but it also includes other events where costumes are worn. Visit

<http://costume.org/wp/pat-and-peggy-kennedy-memorial-archives-catalog/>

About *The International Costumer*

The *International Costumer* newsletter is published bi-monthly by the ICG. The current issue is for members only. Back issues are freely available to the costuming community on the ICG website.

Online Submissions

We welcome short costuming articles, book reviews, event reports, and news items. Submit your copy as rtf, doc, docx or txt files to the editor at icg-newsletter@costume.org. All graphics formats are accepted.

Contacting the Editor

Please contact the editor to report problems, or to offer comments and suggestions:
icg-newsletter@costume.org.

Newsletter Delivery

The *International Costumer* is available as both an online and print edition. Your preference is part of your ICG membership record. To update your information or change your preference, contact your local chapter. Returned copies of the print edition cannot be re-mailed.

Members who have an e-mail address on record are notified when a new issue is available.

Access the online edition at

<http://costume.org/wp/the-international-costumer-newsletter/> The user name is

"**costumer**" and password is "**Gallery is Back**"

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