

# VUMC Through Time: Implementing a Participatory Online Image Archive

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**Abstract:** In alignment with the Vanderbilt University Medical Center's increased emphasis on institutional knowledge management, the Eskind Biomedical Library Special Collections has proposed a participatory model of sharing archival resources with users. This model positions the archives as "facilitator of community history," empowering users to detail, enrich and enhance the historical record. In this model, we create archival spaces for community involvement, disseminating existing resources to create opportunities for online sharing, historical knowledge management, and collection development. The first such space is a comprehensive online image archive using freely available open source software. This website contains over 2500 images documenting Medical Center people and buildings for over 100 years. In developing and publicizing this resource, the library partners with the Schools of Medicine and Nursing, academic departments, news and public affairs, and alumni officers to increase awareness of resources and to encourage sharing and contribution of historical information and resources.

The online image archive was released on June 1, 2012. Over the next week, Special Collections staff distributed the link through Medical Center and University news emails and websites, through medical and nursing alumni offices, through library social media, and through personal email contacts. Through the first five weeks, the image archive accumulated over 3000 visits, 65,000 page views, and 40 contributed images. By offering access to historical images of high social value, the project has also strengthened relationships with key distribution channels in the Medical Center, such as alumni offices, academic departments, and news officers.

## About the authors:

*Christopher Ryland* is Assistant Director for Special Collections at the Eskind Biomedical Library at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. He earned his BA in English from Maryville College and an MSIS from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. A certified archivist, Christopher was also a member of Deloitte Consulting's global knowledge management team from 2001-2003. At Vanderbilt since 2003, Christopher has been instrumental in developing VUMC's digital archives program. Currently, his primary interests are in balancing access needs with those of confidentiality, privacy, and institutional policy.

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