

# OUT OF THE ARCHIVES

## Odyssey tips and tricks

### ARTICLE

Adrienne Evans

### PHOTOGRAPHS

Collection of the Center

IN JUNE 2022, CRP&A STAFF MEMBERS formally selected Odyssey as our Collections Management System (CMS). After a search that lasted more than a year, we felt strongly that this software would prove an immense help in internally accounting for our permanent holdings while becoming a dynamic platform to promote our online collections. In the year since, we have worked closely with its developers on implementation, designed a new descriptive metadata standard, migrated in approximately 8,500 images and captions from Flickr, added some 2,000 new images and captions, set up our new collections portal with advanced search and browsing features, and launched it to the public. While the initial launch of Odyssey has not been without a few hiccups, we have been able to work with the platform developers to make some tweaks and are starting to feel pretty good about what we have created here. We hope you will, too. Read on to learn how best to use Odyssey.

### Basic searches

To start, let's take a look at the search bar on our Odyssey site's homepage (we refer to it as the *Basic Search*). You can use the *Basic Search* to query the entire site—all of our cataloged images and metadata fields—by a keyword or phrase. The *Basic Search* works best for broad, simple searches across multiple collections or as the starting point for a more complicated query.

When using the *Basic Search*, it is best practice to put your search term(s) in quotation marks (a strategy referred to as *phrase searching*), especially when your

search term(s) consist of more than one word. *Phrase searching* helps ensure that your results are accurate; the quotation marks tell the system to treat the word/phrase as a whole, rather than as individual words or parts of longer words. For example, let's say you want to use the *Basic Search* to look for John Gruber photographs. Searching for "John Gruber" without quotations in the *Basic Search* bar will retrieve all results that include the terms "John" or "Gruber" somewhere in their metadata. This search is too broad for our purpose, as it pulls not only images from the John Gruber Collection, but also from the John C. Illman and John F. Bjorklund collections. Searching for "John Gruber" with quotation marks, however, will retrieve every image that contains the exact phrase "John Gruber" in its metadata.

### Narrowing basic search results

Basic searches typically yield broad results, leaving the user with multiple images through which to sort. Continuing from our previous example, entering "John Gruber" in the *Basic Search* bar pulls up 1,533 images (as of August 2023 when I wrote this; there will be even more by the time you read this). That's too many results to be useful unless your aim is to peruse the whole Gruber Collection at random.

Utilizing search filters, which appear along the left side of the results page, enables you to narrow your results by various topics. These filters reflect any of the additional subjects, locations, etc., that are found in the search results. Depending on your search, the filter categories can include *Subject*, *Format*, *Decade*, *Location*, *Creation Date*, *Creator*, and *Railroad*. If you click one category, a drop-down list of narrower terms/categories will appear beneath to help you refine your results. For example, selecting the term *Railroad employees*, which is nested beneath the *Subject* search filter, within our John Gruber search results will retrieve all of the John Gruber photographs that have been subject-tagged with the term *Railroad employees*. With this action, we've reduced our search results from 1,533 to 476 images. If we want, we can use additional search filters to refine our results even further. For example, now that you're viewing all of John Gruber's images that feature railroad employees, say that you want to see Gruber's photos of North Shore Railroad workers. You can simply click on the *Railroad* search filter and select *North Shore Railroad* from the list that appears below. This reduces the number of images from 476 to ninety-nine.

Below: Screenshot of the our new collections homepage on the Odyssey platform with an example of *phrase searching* for "John Gruber" in the *basic search* box.

Opposite: The results page of a *Basic Search* for "John Gruber" that's been narrowed by the term *railroad employees*, which is visible with the *search filters* outlined in red on the left side.



# SITE SEARCH

[Home](#) | [Site Search](#)

"John Gruber"



"John Gruber"

Sort By Relevance

### Search Filters

Subjects 217

Terms begin with...

[Railroad Employees](#) -

Steam Locomotives 197

Passenger Trains 141

Railroad Stations 117

More: [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) >>

Format 3

Decade 4

Location 100

Creation Date/Date Range 24

Creator 2

### Railroad (CRPA Archival Item)

Terms begin with...

[North Shore Railroad Nshr](#) 99

[Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad Cbq](#) 58

[Duluth & Northeastern Railroad Dne](#) 42

More: [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) >>

Showing 1 to 25 of 476 entries



Gruber-06-16-140

Jimmie Neis inside the signal tower at Chicago Union Station on June 6, 1964.



Gruber-08-05-057

After collecting tickets, Tom Burke and Fred Loften talk with passengers on...



Gruber-08-153-011

Herman Miller (1925-2004) of Mineral Point, Wisconsin, gives hand signals w...



Gruber-05-03-385

Passengers buy tickets for a trip on the last night of the Chicago North Sh...



Gruber-01-001-01

Milwaukee Road locomotive no. 1119 in Prarie du Sac, Wisconsin in 1948.



Gruber-01-006-06

A worker crossing the tracks towards a Reading Railroad steam locomotive in...



Gruber-01-007-05

Burlington Route steam locomotive no. 641 in Nebraska with mountains in the...



Gruber-01-008-05

A Denver & Rio Grande Western steam locomotive entering Moffat Tunnel's...



Gruber-01-008-13

Denver & Rio Grande Western locomotive no. 488 waits as the engine crew...

### Advanced searches: Search criteria

To access Odyssey’s *Advanced Search* feature, click Advanced Search on the site’s home page (look below the *Basic Search* bar). Incorporating various ways to combine multiple search criteria, *Advanced Search* enables users to retrieve more specific results than *Basic Search*. Currently, users can search by the following criteria:

**Identifier:** This criterion will search the digital collections based on the image’s staff-assigned ID, which is typically the same as the image’s filename. The Identifier is a combination of letters and numbers, often including the image creator’s name. When posting on social media or publishing photographs from our collections in *Railroad Heritage*, we usually include image IDs at the end of each image caption. Examples: Furler-01-01-001; Bjorklund-18-17-09; Shaughnessy-N-NW-0009

**Date/Range:** This criterion refers to the date or date range you would like to search. Typically, you would want to base this search on the period you’re

interested in researching or the assumed creation date of the image you would like to retrieve.

**Description:** This criterion searches description fields of the images’ metadata where much of our caption information appears.

**Keyword/Subject:** This criterion searches the digital collections by the various subject tags that catalogers have applied to each image record. Common subject tags include: Steam locomotive; Diesel locomotive; Railroad station; Railroad employee, etc.

**Person:** This criterion searches the digital collections by an individual’s name and typically retrieves images by a particular creator. You would use this field to search the collections by photographers such as John Gruber, Richard Steinheimer, Jim Shaughnessy, etc.

**Railroad:** This criterion searches the digital collections by railroad name. As a general rule, catalogers tag images in the digital collections with the name of the operating railroad depicted in the image. Please note that we use a controlled vocabulary of railroad names compiled by our staff to ensure that images are tagged consistently. We have generally tended to use the full, legal names of the railroads for the controlled vocabulary unless they have been superseded in usage by popular names. For example, we use Milwaukee Road in the controlled vocabulary rather than Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad. However, thanks to some of our backend engineering, you should be able to search either railroad name variant and receive the same results. We also include reporting marks, so you can search by them in the *Railroad* field, too.

It’s important to note that, like *Basic Searches*, *Advanced Search* parameters can be narrowed using *Search Filters* on the results page.

### Advanced searches: Boolean search operators

Multiple search criteria can be combined using what are called Boolean Search Operators, which are located at the bottom of the Advanced Search page and preceded with the phrase: “With respect to the search criteria above.” This phrase is followed by two buttons to select between:

**Return results that match all the criteria (“AND”):** The Boolean Search Operator AND requires both terms to be included in the metadata of the returned images. If one term is contained in the metadata and the other is not, the item is not included in the

An *Advanced Search* with “Jim Shaughnessy” and “Railroad employees” combined with the Boolean Search Operator AND. Note that the *Require all terms* boxes are checked to the right of each of the search terms.

CRPA & A

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## ADVANCED SEARCH

[Home](#) | [Advanced Search](#)

**Identifier**

Require all terms

Exact matches only

**Date/Range**

**Person**

Require all terms

Exact matches only

**Description**

Require all terms

Exact matches only

**Keyword/Subject**

Require all terms

Exact matches only

**Railroad**

Require all terms

Exact matches only

With respect to the search criteria above...

Return results that match ALL the criteria ("AND")

Return results that match ANY criterion ("OR")

resulting list. Selecting this option will narrow your search parameters.

*Example:* An advanced search of “Jim Shaughnessy” AND “Railroad employees” currently results in 136 returned images by Jim Shaughnessy that depict railroad workers.

Return results that match any criterion (“OR”): The Boolean Search Operator OR requires either term (or both) to be included in the metadata of the returned images. Selecting this option broadens your search parameters.

*Example:* An advanced search of “Jim Shaughnessy” OR “Railroad employees” currently results in 2,070 returned images which include all Jim Shaughnessy’s photographs on Odyssey as well as every image in our digital collections that depicts railroad workers.

### Advanced searches:

#### Exact match vs. require all terms

Underneath each search term box is a checkbox accompanied by the phrase *Exact matches only*. Checking this box will limit your search to the precise word or phrase that you enter in the search box. This is not to be confused with the *Require all terms* checkbox to the right of the search box. Clicking this box enables the user to run a search of a phrase composed of multiple words as a single search term.

Let’s use a railroad search query to illustrate the utility of these two boxes and the difference between them. Say you want to run a site-wide search of the Center’s holdings that depict DLW operations. Simply typing “Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad” into the Railroad search box creates too broad of a search. 10,038 images are retrieved with this search and they include images of the DLW as well as the Erie Lackawanna and the Western Pacific. Each word in the railroad’s name has been queried as a separate term with this search, yielding wildly inaccurate results.

Your next inclination may be to hit the *Exact match* checkbox to search every catalog record that includes the railroad’s name verbatim. However, this search yields zero results as the Center actually expresses DLW’s full name in our controlled vocabulary with an ampersand rather than the word “and.” *Exact match* is a great tool for refining searches as long as you know exactly what you’re looking for and the Center’s controlled vocabulary term for it.

*Require all terms* is your best option for this search (and for most searches that are composed of multi-

The screenshot displays the CRP&A website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links: EXPLORE | BROWSE IMAGES | FEATURED GALLERY | FEEDBACK | ABOUT THE CRP&A. Below this, the image ID "LAMB-01-004-01" is prominently displayed, along with smaller links for "Home | Browse Images | Lamb-01-004-01" and a note "From collection J. Parker Lamb Collection". A "SHARE" button is visible on the left. The main image shows a diesel locomotive on tracks with a person standing nearby. On the right side, a "More Detail" link is present. Below the image, the record title "Lamb-01-004-01" is followed by a descriptive caption: "North Dayton, Ohio, operator passes orders to southbound Baltimore and Ohio Railroad extra train on August 21, 1955-". To the right of the image is a metadata sidebar with the following sections: "Details" (Identifier, Creator, Geographic location, Railroad), "Subjects" (Diesel locomotives, Railroad employees, Railroad stations, train order hoop, Train orders), "Physical Description", "Format of Original", and "Type". The "Subjects" section is highlighted with a red border, indicating it is expanded.

word phrases). This option enables searches of the words as one term, but does not bind you to searching the exact phrase. Searching “Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad” with the *Require all terms* box checked retrieves seventy-six results: all of the Center’s images that feature DLW trains and operations.

#### Browsing, collocating, and feedback

Our Odyssey site features several tools for users who prefer to peruse the Center’s digital collections rather than searching by specific criteria. For instance, clicking *Browse Images* on the site’s main menu bar navigates to a feed that includes all of the Center’s images. Appearing in random order, the images can be scrolled vertically, optimal for casual smartphone browsing.

Users wanting a more curated experience can click *Explore* on the the menu bar. Catalog records and images picked by the Center’s staff are featured under this tab. We currently have them arranged into the following albums: New Addition Highlights; Madison, Wisconsin, Railroading; Animals and Children; and Whatever the Weather. This feature has been a staff

Item-level image record for Lamb-01-004-01. The main caption can be found on the left side of the screen while descriptive metadata elements are visible on the right side. Users can click the small plus signs (+) next to each metadata element to reveal more information about the image. Outlined in red, the *Subject* element has been expanded to show the blue controlled vocabulary subject tags.

## RAILROAD STATIONS

[Home](#) | [Railroad stations](#)

## Search results

Sort By **Relevance** ▾

## Search Filters

Date/Date Range	4
Subjects	594
Format	6
Decade	14
Location	873
Creation Date/Date Range	73
Creator	37
Railroad (CRPA Archival Item)	320

Showing 1 to 25 of 1,382 entries



Hadley-01-023-04

Southbound Ann Arbor Railroad engine no. 1612 pulls train no. 52 into the d...



Bjorklund-64-30-01

Westbound Milwaukee Road diesel locomotive no. 2070 pulling a freight train...



Kistler-Loggers-TEMP-06-005

Santa Fe Railway "El Capitan" hi-level, featuring the lit drumhead on the r...



Kistler-Loggers-TEMP-06-007

An action shot of Santa Fe Railway train departing Los Angeles Union Passen...



Lamb-01-004-01

North Dayton, Ohio, operator passes orders to southbound Baltimore and Ohio...



Kistler-SF-TEMP-02-003

A railroad employee can be seen hard at work late in the evening in the win...



Kistler-SF-TEMP-18-009

Santa Fe Railway shops and A Yard, full of locomotives, freight cars, and c...



Springer-ARG-PA-CHI-BO2-13-37

Empresa Nacional de Ferrocarriles Bolivia 2-10-2 steam locomotive no. 704 p...



Springer-ARG-PA-CHI-BO2-13-15

Empresa Nacional de Ferrocarriles Bolivia diesel locomotive no. DE 1011 wai...

Right: The results page of collocating all of the images currently in Odyssey that are subject tagged with the term *Railroad stations*.

Opposite, below: Abigail Guidry posing with Gruber-09-183b-212 on her last day at the Center. The whimsical photograph from our John Gruber Collection shows a hippopotamus sculpture in Baraboo, Wisconsin, about to chomp down on Abigail's favorite locomotive, Chicago & North Western 1385. Photograph by Adrienne Evans

favorite, and we are looking forward to rotating image selections on a regular basis.

Also accessible from the menu bar is the *Featured Gallery* tab. Clicking this tab currently takes the user to an online exhibit of images from the Center's past #WorkerWednesday posts on social media. The *Featured Gallery* should not be confused with albums under the *Explore* tab. The *Gallery* displays images with captions but not full catalog records with complete sets of metadata. In addition, the user must click through the images in the *Gallery* one at a time, while the *Explore* albums present the user with multiple images simultaneously. At this point, we are unsure to what extent we will be using the *Featured Gallery*, but we are certainly interested in hearing feedback about it. Please do not hesitate to reach out with questions and comments.

Utilizing controlled vocabulary terms in our catalog records has created a great way for users to browse the collections by subject, location, railroad,

creator, and more. When looking at an item-level catalog record, the user will notice that the text of some metadata elements is blue, which indicates controlled vocabulary terms. Clicking one of these blue terms will collocate every image in Odyssey that has been tagged with the same term. For instance, say you're viewing Lamb-01-004-01, which was taken at a train station, and you'd like to see images of train stations from across all of the Center's collections. You'd simply click the term *Train stations*, which appears in the catalog record under the *Subject* element. This collocates the 1,382 catalog records that have been tagged with the term *Train stations* onto one results page. If you want to narrow the results, you can then filter the results using the search filters on the left side of the page.

Finally, while we make every effort to ensure our image descriptions and controlled vocabulary terms are accurate, we often have to post images with very little corresponding metadata. And we do, on occasion,

make mistakes in our caption-writing—as do some of the photographers whose work appears in our collections, and upon whose notes most of our captions are based. We are grateful to have such a passionate and engaged community to keep us honest! Click the *Feedback* tab in the upper right corner of the Odyssey menu bar to submit comments and corrections regarding captions and images.

### Railroad Heritage Visual Archive updates

At our Monroe Street office in Madison, archives and administrative assistant Abigail Guidry, processing archivist Natalie Krecek, and reference and digital projects archivist Erin Rose have all taken a break from their processing duties to focus on the public launch of Odyssey. Natalie has been populating the site with new selections from the Jim Shaughnessy Collection while Abigail has been adding John Gruber’s images. Erin has been splitting her time between posting John C. Illman’s work and troubleshooting issues with the site. Between the three of them, they have posted approximately 2,000 new images to the site in the last few months.

Out at our archival storage space, processing archivist Gil Taylor is nearing the end of the slides in the Henry Posner III Collection. Gil is currently processing slides from Posner’s travels in South Africa. At his current pace, Gil expects to finish processing the collection this fall and then plans to post the digitized images to Odyssey. Meanwhile, associate archivist Heather Sonntag continues her work with the Steinheimer-Burman Collection. She’s finished going through the boxes of “misfiled” slides and is now starting to process Box A. She’s digitized approximately 2,300 images from the collection thus far.

Finally, I am afraid I have to end on some bittersweet staffing news. Archives and administrative assistant Abigail Guidry is off to the big city! She moved to Philadelphia in late July, and we gave her a proper send-off complete with a souvenir print from the John Gruber Collection. Over the past few years, Abigail has almost single handedly digitized 40,000 of John Gruber’s negatives and made countless contributions to the Center’s adoption of Odyssey. For the next month or so, Abigail will be staying on with us part-time to help wrap up her archives projects and administrative responsibilities. Best of luck, Abigail!

*Learn more about Odyssey in a presentation by Adrienne Evans and Erin Rose at: [www.YouTube.com/railphotoart](http://www.YouTube.com/railphotoart) •*

Collection	Processing Status
Jim Shaughnessy	45% complete (paused for Odyssey launch)
John Gruber	50% complete (paused for Odyssey launch)
Henry Posner III	In progress, 85% complete for images on-site
Richard Steinheimer / Shirley Burman Steinheimer	In progress, 10% complete
John C. Illman	Images on-site complete
Stan Kistler	Estimated start: Fall 2023
Karl Zimmermann	Estimated start: Fall 2023

