Literary sources on the Internet

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The New York Society Library

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LITERARY RESOURCES ON THE INTERNET

Online texts

A wide variety of literary texts are available on the Internet. This class a brief overview of a few finding aids for online texts, the major sites that provide online texts, and look at a few literary reference resources.

This manual is not a comprehensive directory of every source of online texts. If you're a specialist in a particular author or period of literature, this class may not be helpful. We'll specifically look at American fiction today. American literature, closely followed by English literature, receives the most comprehensive treatment on the Internet. Literature in other languages has been slow to develop on the Internet because a slower pervasiveness of Internet usage or funding in those countries.

Copyright

Copyright has proven to be one of the biggest hurdles in providing access to electronic texts. Librarians and much of the academic community are in favor of open access and shorter copyright periods; authors and publishing firms have aggressively pursued their right of ownership and royalties. For this reason early American literature is well digitized and freely available; all of these works are long out of copyright.

Copyright laws differ by country, but Internet access easily crosses borders. You'll notice today that the period of copyright protection in the United States is much longer than in Australia. Readers in the US can easily view and download texts from Australian sites; several digitization projects have taken advantage of this difference and place texts on Australian sites long before they can appear on an site in the United States.

An article by Mary Minow, an attorney and librarian, gives an excellent overview of copyright issues in her article *Library digitization projects and copyright*. It's easy to read and she includes some fun examples.

Source material and cataloging data

The majority of online texts that we'll look at today were digitized from a print edition. Not all sites, however, give comprehensive data on which print edition was used in the creation of a digitized text. The very best digital libraries provide a full catalog record of source data. Sites with digitized images of text allow the reader to view publishing information for him/herself.

Formats

Electronic texts were originally created and viewed in very simple text formats. Early computers processed even simple text very slowly, and storage was costly. Storage and processing speed are now, however, very cheap, and online texts are available in a wider variety of formats.

The most common format is flat text. Flat text appears as long, scrolling bodies of text only formatted by paragraph breaks. These files can be taxing on the eye to read, but almost anyone with even a low-level connection can read them.

Flat text can also be compressed into a .zip file. To view these files, download the zip file to your own computer and extract it in Windows Explorer. You'll now have the entire work on your own hard drive.

E-book formats have become popular in recent years. An e-book reader looks like a Palm Pilot. A large number of books are available for free to anyone with an e-book reader, and many newer books are issued in e-book formats for a cost. There is also a digital format for viewing books in a Palm Pilot.

Image/text sites offer the very best digital texts. The reader can view images of the original text (page by page) as well as view a flat text and/or

a .pdf file. Image/text sites, unfortunately, often use microfilm as the source of their images, and the original microfilm can be of varying quality.

DIRECTORIES & GATEWAYS

THE ONLINE BOOKS PAGE

University of Pennsylvania Library, Philadelphia, Penn.

http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ An amazing directory of online texts maintained with good bibliographic principals by the John Mark Ockerbloom University of Pennsylvania Library. Simple design, no graphics, excellent search interface. Almost all the links in this database are accurate and live.

The Online Books Page provides access to works not yet available in the United States for copyright reasons; it directs the reader to an Australian server.

BUBL INFORMATION SERVICE

Centre for Digital Library Research, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland

http://bubl.ac.uk/link/types/biblio4.htm

BUBL is a project from the Centre for Digital Library Research at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland. It was designed as a pre-Internet project to teach librarians about digital resources but found wider popularity in its Internet form. In its present form it is maintained as a gateway of academic electronic resources.

BUBL has maintains pages of resources on particular authors as well as bibliographies, full online texts by particular authors (Blake), and much, much more.

INTERNET PUBLIC LIBRARY

School of Information, University of Michigan

http://www.ipl.org/div/books/
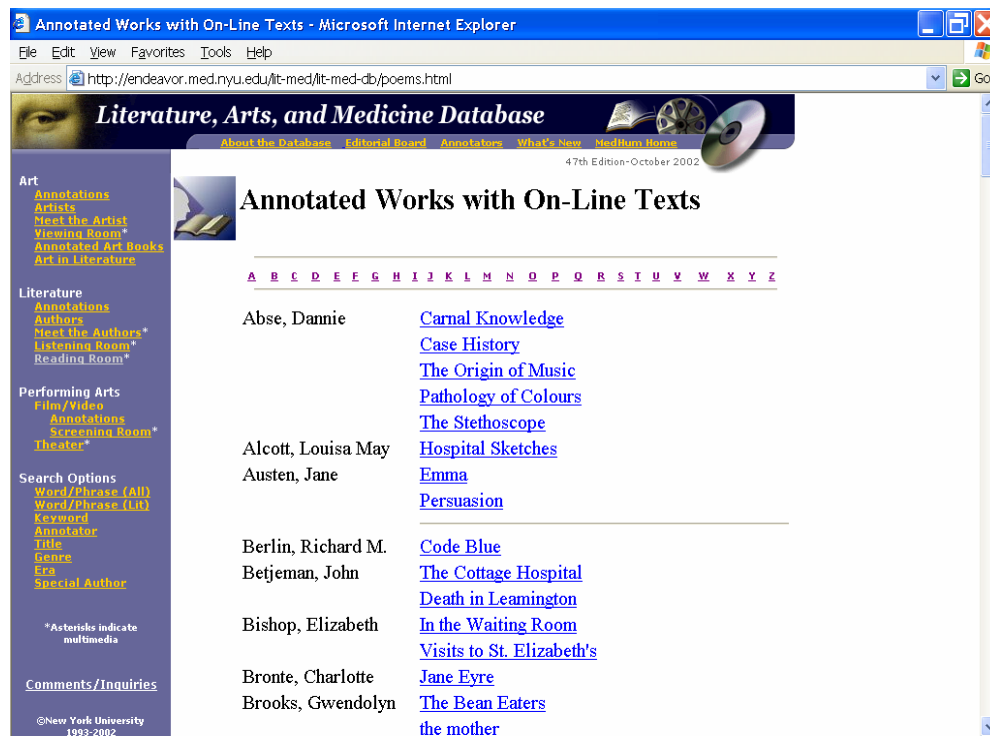
A collection of links to 20,000 online texts. Provides search capability, but seems easiest to use the author or title browse. Entries are rather random and not quality controlled, and in many cases may lead you back to familiar sources of Internet texts at larger institutions.

John Ockerbloom of the University of Pennsylvania Library's Online Books Page (above) recommends the IPL database to find shorter texts and texts not covered in his database.

LITERATURE, ARTS, AND MEDICINE DATABASE

New York University [School of Medicine?], New York

http://endeavor.med.nyu.edu/lit-med/lit-med-db/index.html

"The Literature, Arts, & Medicine Database is an annotated bibliography of prose, poetry, film, video and art which was developed to be a dynamic, accessible, comprehensive resource in MEDICAL HUMANITIES, for use in health/pre-health and liberal arts settings"—Site.

The resources on this page have a purported medical emphasis. A large number of texts are available, not at all narrowly focused on medicine. Each text is accompanied by extensive summary, catalog record, and subject indexing; full publishing and edition are provided for each text. In addition, subject and keyword search capability covers the catalog records and abstracts.

MEMORY OF THE WORLD PROGRAMME

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, [New York, N.Y.?]

http://webworld.unesco.org/production/mow/collections.html

http://webworld.unesco.org/production/mow/collections.html

Warning: site not working well enough to judge its usefulness; please experiment with this site on your own. The Memory of the World (MOW) Programme "aims to offer a listing of major digitized heritage collections and on-going digitization programmes worldwide. It is hoped that this will provide a single focal point of information on digitized collections." A possibly far-reaching catalog of digitized texts.

FULL TEXT SOURCES	## PROJECT GUTENBERG Project Gutenberg, [United States] http://www.gutenberg.net/ ★★★★★ The earliest and perhaps largest repository of electronic texts. Project Gutenberg dates back to 1971 and was an early innovator of the concept of providing texts for free and in the simplest possible computer version available at the time. Unfortunately this means that most of the texts are only available in plain ASCII text and are a little difficult/unattractive to read. The collection includes literature and basic reference sources. It is difficult to browse the lists of authors and titles as they are very long; try to use the search interface. The collection is so large that you may be required to choose a site close to you for downloading purposes; choose one of the United States sites from the list. For this reason, it's easiest to search the Project Gutenberg site via the Online Books Project at the University of Pennsylvania; access information is listed above in this document.

ELECTRONIC TEXT CENTER

University of Virginia Library

http://etext.lib.virginia.edu

"The Electronic Text Center's holdings include approximately 70,000 on- and off-line humanities texts in thirteen languages, with more than 350,000 related images (book illustrations, covers, manuscripts, newspaper pages, page images of Special Collections books, museum objects, etc.)"—Site.

The University of Virginia provides significant online holdings in English, French, German, and Latin, as well as other languages. Full texts are available not only in flat HTML files, but also in e-book format for the MS Reader and Palm Devices. Holdings are arranged not only by language, but also by author and genre.

Electronic resources available to the general public in the University of Virginia collection are significant and worth exploration. The list of resources beyond the University of Virginia collection is noteworthy and helped me in the preparation of this class. The URL is: http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/eng-oth.html

It is important to note that the University of Virginia can only provide unlimited access to works not under any kind of copyright protection. This subset of unprotected materials, while much smaller than the full collection, is still significant.

American literature has been digitized in the Early American Fiction collection, which covers the period 1789-1850. The Early American Fiction, 1850-1875 will soon follow.

This image from the Early American Collections shows the availability of titles. Note that the text may be viewed in HTML, ebook, or palm versions.

Choosing the "biography" link under an author name accesses a biography, as well as a hefty bibliography of the author's works.

MAKING OF AMERICA

Humanities Text Initiative, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan

http://moa.umdl.umich.edu/

"Making of America (MOA) is a digital library of primary sources in American social history from the antebellum period through reconstruction"—Site. Houses about 8,500 American books, including some works of fiction. Texts are viewed as images, and they can take some time to download. The digitized images, however, are especially rich and easy to read.

The site includes a digitized lecture by a former librarian of the New York Society Library from 1856. You can view it at:

http://www.nysoclib.org/testimonials2.html

LIBRARY OF SOUTHERN LITERATURE

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Libraries

http://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/southlit.html
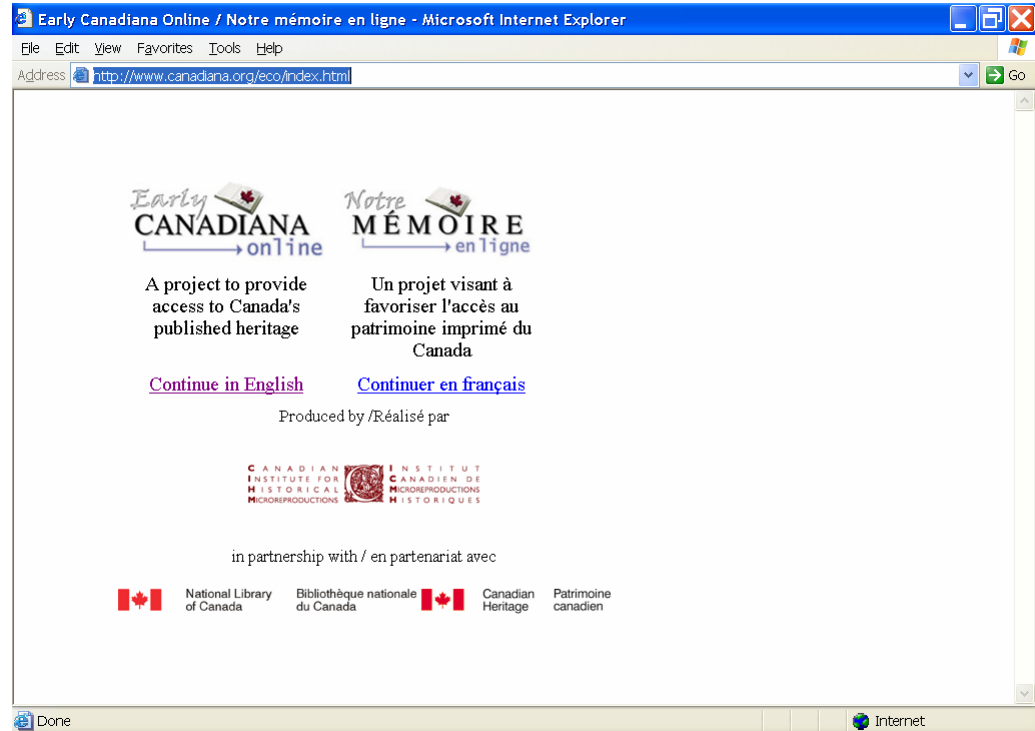
An excellent collection of southern literature from the University of North Carolina. Digitization, arrangement, and cataloging are similar to the Humanities Text Institute site.

EARLY CANADIANA ONLINE = NOTRE MÉMOIRE EN LIGNE
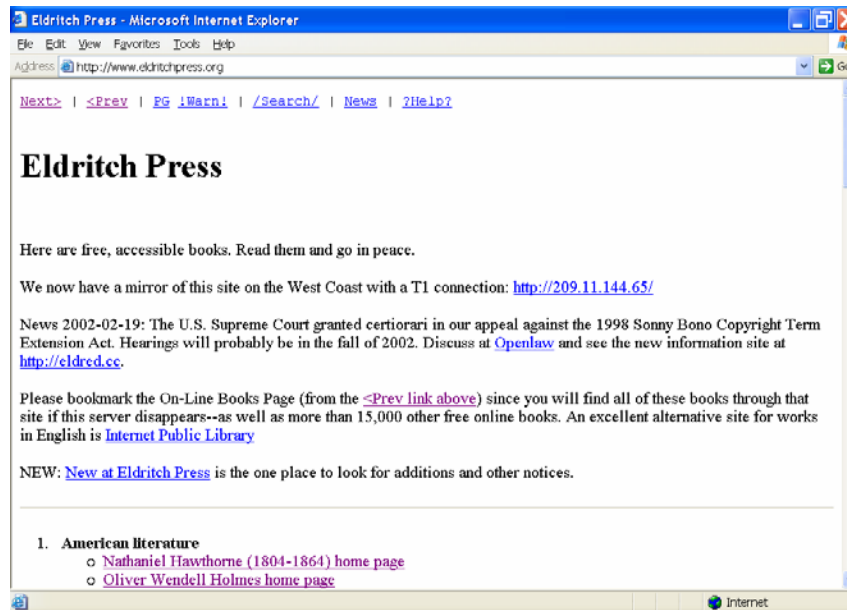
National Library of Canada = Bibliothèque nationale du Canada, Ottawa

http://www.canadiana.org/eco/index.html

Focus on early Canadian literature; site and documents in French and English. Requires registration; only parts of the collection are available free (720,000 of 1.1 million pages). Individuals can access the entire collection for $50 (Canadian).

ELDRITCH PRESS

Eric Eldred, [Massachusetts, United States]

http://www.eldritchpress.org/

A wonderful source of full-text documents with some complete collections of a few well-known authors. The Nathaniel Hawthorne page includes not only his works in full text, but also bibliographies, access to archival materials, illustrations from early editions, and full-text translations in Spanish.

BLACKMASK ONLINE

Blackmask Online, [Australia?]

http://www.blackmask.com/

★★★★★ An enormous collection of online texts. Subject browse from the home page or perform a search of the database. Texts are apparently submitted and reviewed by users of the site, and can be downloaded and viewed in the following formats: Ms-Reader, PDF, Rocket eBook, ZIP, iSilo, or Mobipocket. New titles added weekly. Includes classic and popular works.

UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE E-BOOKS

University of Adelaide Library, Australia

http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/

A nice electronic collection of classic texts. The source of the text is apparently other text collections, but some of the material here appears to be unique to the (electronic) collection. Available in flat text files. Some texts can be downloaded as a .zip file. No edition information is provided on the print sources used to create the electronic texts. The site states (rather harshly) that "no attempt to retain pagination or other textual references which may have been in the source edition. Pagination is considered to be an artifact of the printed medium - a work is divided into pages simply because they are the units of publication in a paper format."

BARTLEBY.COM
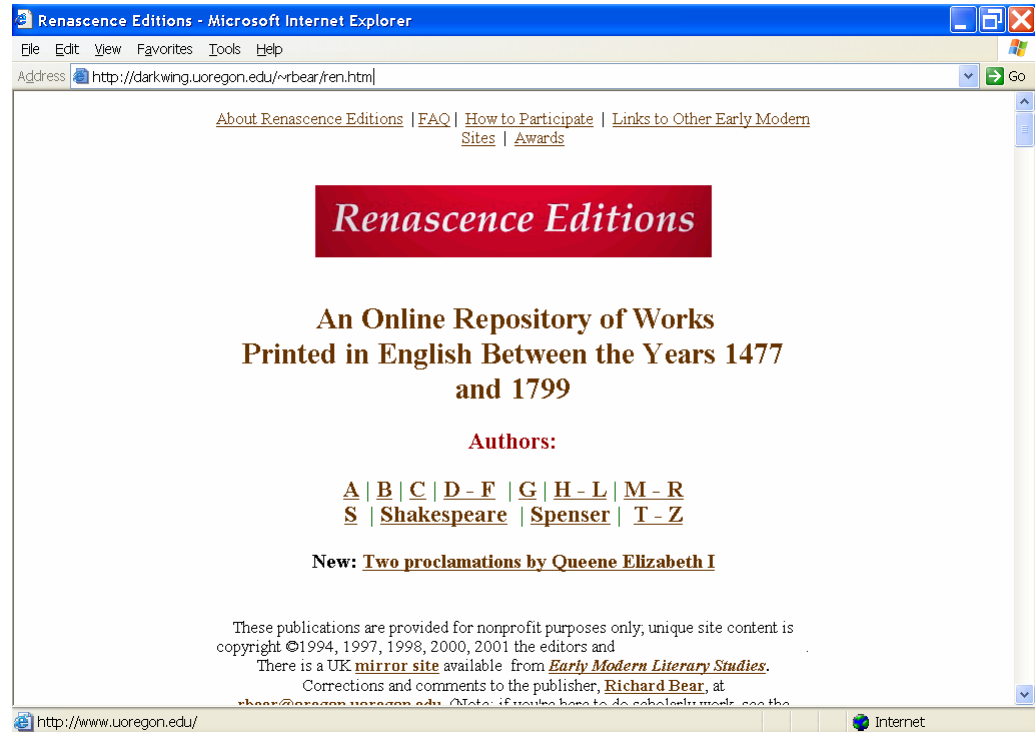
Bartleby.com, New York, N.Y.

http://www.bartleby.com/

Mentioned later in this manual as a great source of online reference texts. Bartleby.com also has a number of online texts from the *Harvard Classics.* Browse by author from the home page. Texts are viewed in flat HTML files.

RENASCENCE EDITIONS
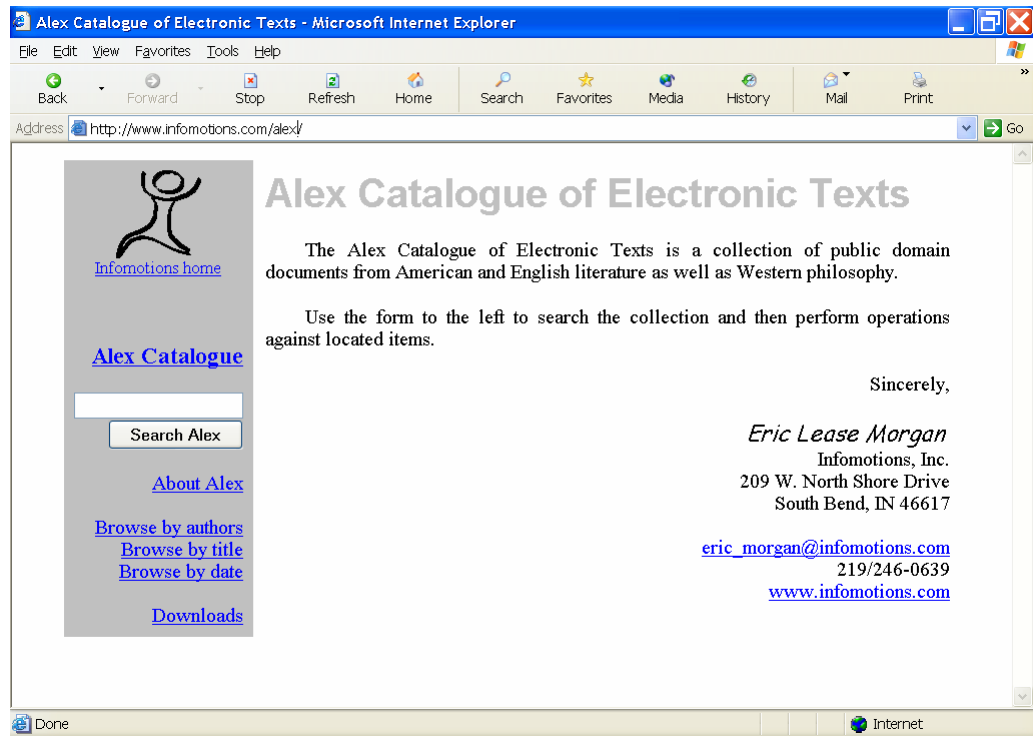
University of Oregon, Eugene, Ore.

http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~rbear/ren.htm

"Renascence Editions is an effort to make available online works printed in English between the years 1477 (when Caxton began printing) and 1799. These texts [...] are not represented by the publisher as scholarly editions in the peer-reviewed sense. They are made available to the public for nonprofit purposes only"—Site. 162 titles. Despite disclaimer, most electronic texts are taken from authoritative editions.

ALEX CATALOGUE OF ELECTRONIC TEXTS

Infomotions, Inc., South Bend, Ind.
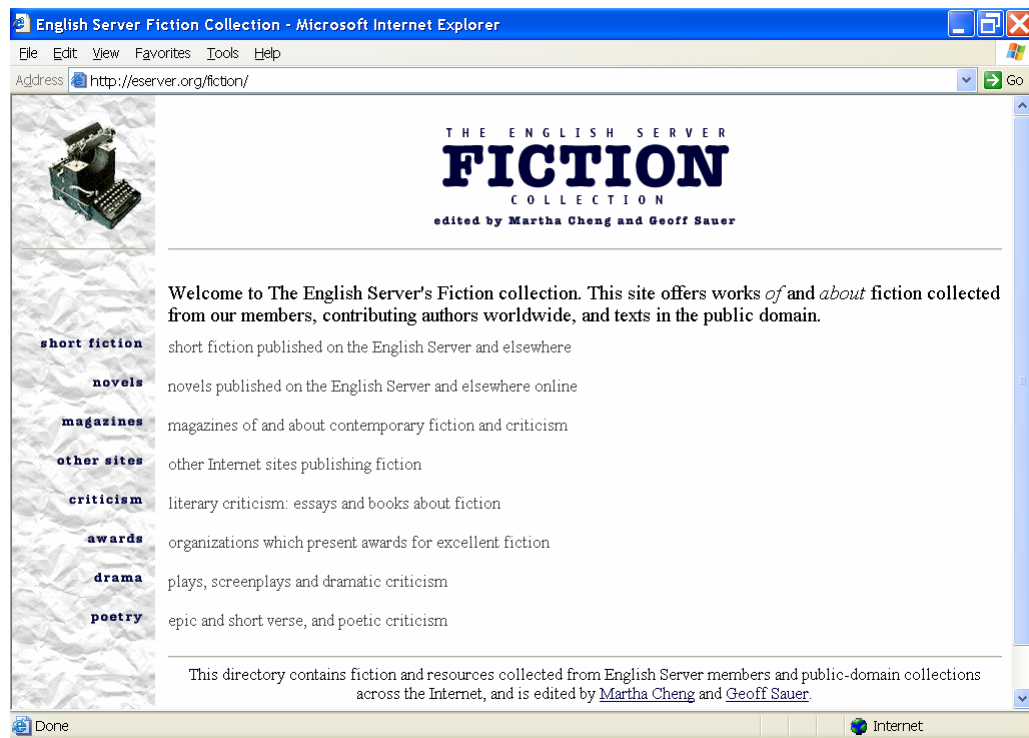
http://www.infomotions.com/alex/

This site was formerly a pre-Internet project, dating from 1994. The project is now maintained privately by the creator. Much of the material on this site can be found at other full-text sites, but Alex offers a variety of viewing formats (HTML, PDF, Newton Paperback, Palm Pilot, Rocket eBook) that may not be available at the original locations.
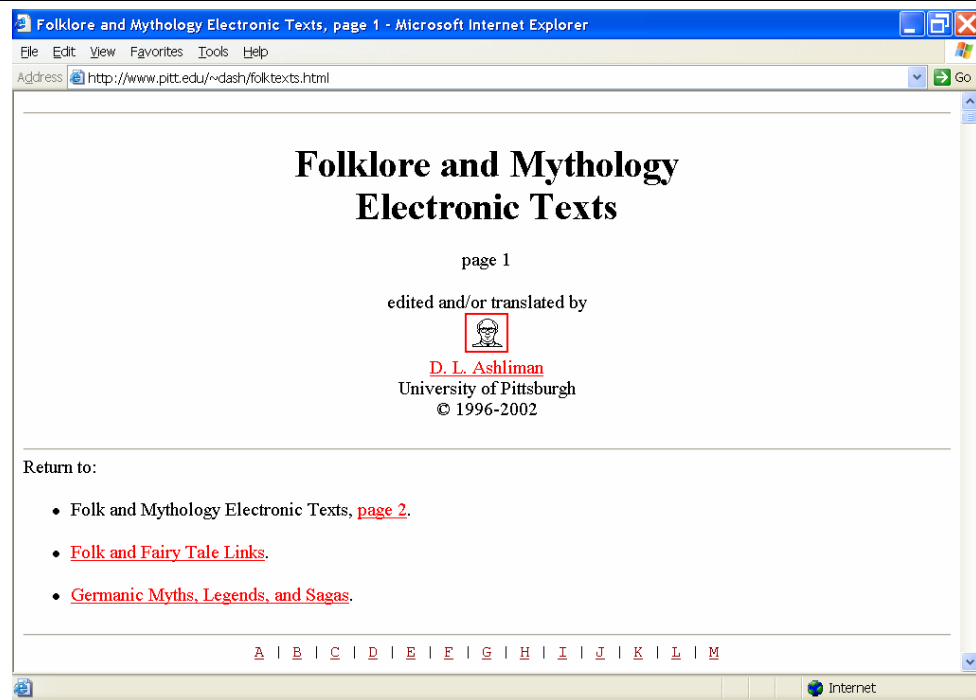
THE ENGLISH SERVER FICTION COLLECTION

University of Washington, Seattle

http://eserver.org/fiction/

"This site offers works *of* and *about* fiction collected from our members, contributing authors worldwide, and texts in the public domain"—Site. Short stories and novels, many in full text. The source of many of the texts is unclear. Texts are also available only in flat HTML text; they take time to download and aren't particularly easy to browse or read. Many dead links.

FOLKLORE AND MYTHOLOGY ELECTRONIC TEXTS

D.L. Ashliman, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburg, Penn.

http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/folktexts.html

Site edited and maintained by D.L. Alishman. Folklore and mythology texts from many countries. Includes American and English authors. Texts arranged by title, author, or mythological type.

GREAT LITERATURE ONLINE

Cyber Learning Studios, Alachua, Fla.

http://www.mostweb.cc/Classics/

A collection of short stories and novels. The site relies on advertising; the flashing text and graphics can be annoying. HTML texts on the site are donated by members; the texts are not always authoritative. Author biographies from *Microsoft Encarta*.

BIOGRAPHIES	**AMERICAN NATIONAL BIOGRAPHY**
	Oxford University Press, New York
	http://www.nysoclib.org/remote.html
	A resource available to New York Society Library users. Access either from within the Library or by following the instructions at the above URL.

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REFERENCE SOURCES	## BARTLEBY.COM Bartleby.com, New York, N.Y. http://www.bartleby.com/

The best reference source on the web. Free for now, who knows what will happen in the future. Highlights of the collection, accessible from the home page, include the Columbia Encyclopedia, the American Heritage Dictionary, Roget's Thesaurus, and many, many others.

THE INTERNET CLASSICS ARCHIVES

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass.
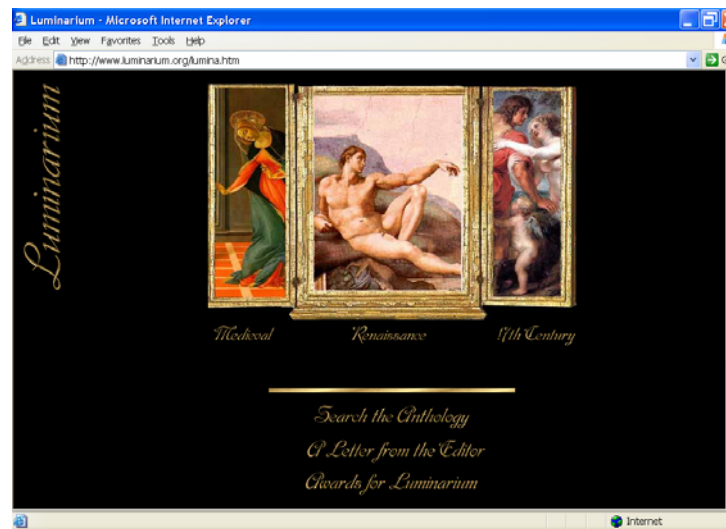
http://classics.mit.edu/
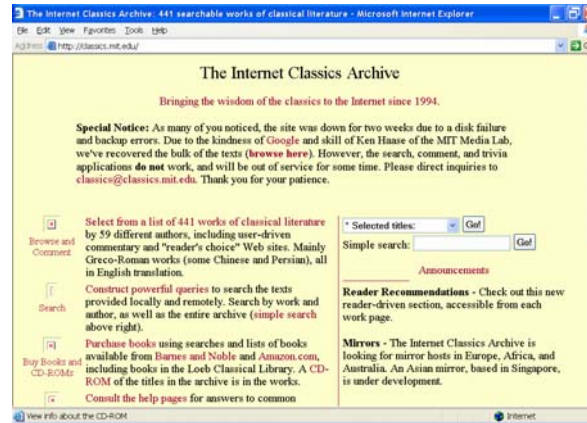
441 works of classical literature by 59 authors in full text, freely available to the public. Includes Graeco-Roman, Chinese, and Persian texts.

LUMINARIUM

Anniina Jokinen, [S.I.]

http://www.luminarium.org/lumina.htm

Anthology of Middle English, Renaissance, and 17th century English literature. Arranged by author; includes biography, images, works, criticism, and citations.

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

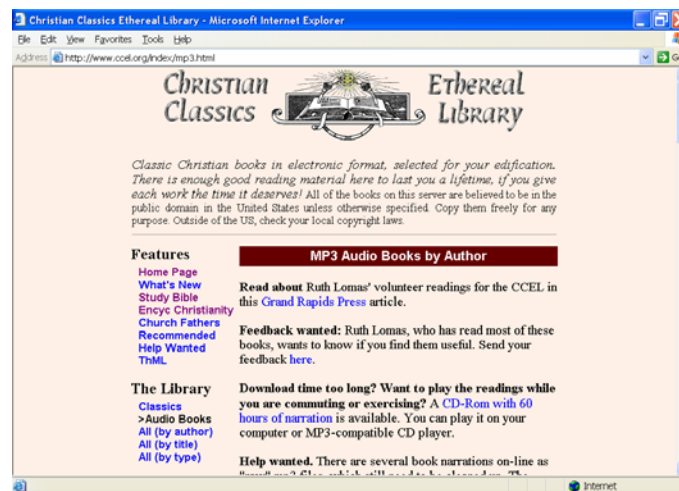Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass.

http://the-tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare/

CHRISTIAN CLASSICS ETHEREAL LIBRARY

Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich.

http://www.ccel.org/

A quick reference site for Christianity-related texts. Includes the Bible, the Encyclopedia of Christianity, and other useful texts.