

Feeding America: The Historic American Cookbook Project

URL: <http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/cookbooks/index.html>

The Historic American Cookbook Project



Feeding America

- **What**
 - Online collection of “influential and important American cookbooks from the late 18th to early 20th century.”
 - Features:
 - Digital images of the pages of each cookbook
 - Full-text transcriptions
 - Ability to search within the books and across the collection
 - Partners: Michigan State University Library and Michigan State University Museum
- **Why**
 - MSU Libraries' Special Collections holds around 7,000 volumes on the culinary arts
 - In 2001, MSU received a 2-year, \$250,000 IMLS grant to digitize items from the MSU Cookery Collection
- **How**
 - 75 books were chosen to represent American culinary history
 - Page images (TIF,JPG,PDF) text transcriptions, encoded text (XML), and multidimensional museum objects (digital images, movies) were produced
 - The “Feeding America Coder Instruction Manual” lists both unqualified Dublin Core elements and a customized tagset devised for the project
 - The manual also specifies sets of metadata items and their meanings
 - Indexing was done by the MSU Digital & Multimedia Center and MSU Libraries
- **Where**
 - Housed on the MSU website (<http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/cookbooks/index.html>)
 - Data contributor to OAIster (<http://www.oaister.org/browse/browseem.html>)
- **Learn more**
 - Except where otherwise noted, all of the information and images in this presentation/handout came from the Feeding America: The Historic American Cookbook Project website.
 - The website also includes an introductory essay that discusses the project and the history of cookbooks in America, a video tour that highlights items in the collection, detailed descriptions of the digitization and editorial processes, and the project’s encoding guidelines, including the Document Type Definition (DTD).



What can cookbooks tell us about history and culture?

As part of almost every household, cookbooks provide a glimpse of how people really lived, such as what kinds of foods were preferred in a culture or were available in a particular geographical area. In addition to recipes, early cookbooks contain advice and information on all kinds of things, including raising a garden, preserving foods, remedies for illness and injury, making household products, and handling emergencies like fire or poisoning. Cookbooks are a window into history. Through early American cookbooks, we can see the blending of immigrant cultures, social activism, advances in science, and other developments in American society.

Source: “Feeding America: Exploring Historic American Cookbooks at the MSU Library.” Online video. [Michigan State University Libraries](http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/cookbooks/multimedia/cookbooks.ram). Accessed 19 April 2009. <<http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/cookbooks/multimedia/cookbooks.ram>>