Bloomsbury Fashion Central

Berg Fashion Library & Fashion Photography Archive

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Summary: *Bloomsbury Fashion Central's* content is notable due to its historical through present day and international coverage of fashion that could be useful for programs such as fashion, history, humanities, drama, and art.

What is it?

Bloomsbury Fashion Central consists of two products: Berg Fashion Library and Fashion Photography Archive. Berg Fashion Library was previously available through Oxford University Press. As of April 2016 subscriptions go directly through Bloomsbury Publishing and they added the Fashion Photography Archive as an optional resource.

Berg Fashion Library (BFL) includes a range of international fashion resources covering any body adornment or modification from prehistory to present day. Resources include full text fashion eBooks, 13,000 color images from museums, essays, primary sources, a timeline feature, and lesson plans and biblio guides. Much of the materials come from the print version of the Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion and other Berg titles. Biblio guides are links to Berg Fashion Library articles & bibliographies organized by a common theme that instructors can also use as a lesson planning tool. BFL is provided through a reasonably priced flat subscription rate per year regardless of FTEs, which makes it inexpensive for larger institutions and reasonable for smaller institutions.

Fashion Photography Archive (FPA), a smaller collection, includes over 1,000 images (with more being added until they reach 750,000 images) from the 1970s to 2000. Images include fashion shows, celebrities, and designers. Also included are a timeline, lesson plans, videos, and academic articles. Images come from international runway shows by photographer Niall McInerney curated by Valerie Steele of the Director of the Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology. FPA is offered via a pay--to--own model with two options: 1) pay a yearly fee until you reach the list price; or 2) buy it outright. Once you pay off the list price, there is a $200/year hosting fee.

The audience recommended for these resources includes fashion, cultural studies, visual arts (like photography), media studies, drama & costume studies, history, anthropology, and museum studies.

Similar fashion products include: Vogue Archives by ProQuest that covers 1892-present, Fashion Studies Online by Alexander Street Press that covers that last 40 years, and Women's Wear Daily Archives by ProQuest that covers the publication from 1910-present. For fashion forecasting, libraries can look to Fashion Snoops and Trend Council. These fashion resources, although all on fashion, have their own focus: Vogue and Women's Wear Daily are databases that include access to a single publication on fashion, which presents the information in a different manner than Berg. Fashion Studies Online is composed of videos (accessibility unknown) from runways and documentaries to present fashion over the years. Berg Fashion Library (BFL) stands out among these other fashion products listed above because of its international and historical coverage in the form of reference articles and photographs (from Berg print resources) which may make it easier for students to capture the historical significance in addition to the aesthetics and trends of fashion when paired with the high quality photographs.

Quick Evaluation

Both products provide what the vendor promises. Both resources use the same interface and are easy to search and navigate. Navigation works well from mobile devices, but the visual & interactive timeline was a little harder to navigate on a smaller screen. Citations include APA, Chicago, and MLA 7th edition. Given how visual and tactile fashion can be, accessibility becomes more challenging for the users and vendors. Some parts of these resources are compliant (you can navigate with the tab and spacebar key, but it can take a lot of work to get to the content you wanted), but other areas aren't compliant at all, such as the timeline and videos. The timeline feature has the most issues due to its visual interactivity. Alternative text is missing for photos in the timeline. When using the tab key on the timeline page, it completely skips over the photos (meaning you can't click through to get to additional information about the photographed item). The few videos included in Fashion Photography Archive do not include captions, scrolling text, or transcripts. Bloomsbury is working on a Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT), suggesting that they may be interested in increasing the product's accessibility.

For community colleges, BFL could provide resources for fashion, history, and drama departments. Fashion Photography Archives could be useful for colleges that have departments which need fashion images from 1970-2000.

<u>Conclusion</u>

Berg Fashion Library is a reasonably priced fashion article & photograph database with international and historical coverage. Colleges should take the accessibility issues into consideration before committing. Fashion Photography Archive, given its smaller collection limited to the last 30 years and hosting fee (after paying the list price), will find a limited audience among community colleges.

Relevant Links

Relevant Vendor Webpages:
Berg Fashion Library Overview
Fashion Photography Archive Overview
Subscriber Services

Reviews:
There are several reviews available in Choice, Art Libraries Journal, Charleston Advisor & Library Journal (link below), but the reviews were written when Berg Fashion Library was hosted by Oxford University Press (through March 2016). Based on their descriptions and screenshots the product has the same content, but the interface has been updated.

Fashion Collection Reference eReviews (Library Journal, 2016)