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## Eye on the Web

### Virtual Spectacles

Spectacles have enhanced the lives of countless people over the last few hundred years, yet most of us take them for granted. In addition to a few individual collectors and enthusiasts, there are several small societies and museums dedicated to visual aids such as the Ocular Heritage Society<sup>1</sup> in the United States and the British Optical Association Museum<sup>2</sup> in London, England. Now there is an incredible online collection of everything related to visual aids created by David Fleishman, MD, a retired ophthalmologist in Massachusetts, with the help of more than 1100 contributors from around the world.<sup>3</sup>

On his Web site you can learn about the history of visual aids from their invention in the 13th century in Italy to the present day. There is a guide to various design features with the corresponding time period and a spectacle terminology glossary. There are special topics such as articles about optical fans and the spectacles of famous people, from Abraham Lincoln to Sigmund Freud and Audrey Hepburn. Every article is accompanied by beautiful images of spectacles (**Figure**) and people, both real and mythical, wearing them throughout history. There is also a list of museums around the world with collections of antique spectacles.



**Figure.** Antique spectacles made by John McAllister, who established the first optical shop in America in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

You will need some time to fully appreciate the value of this Web site, with its 260 pages and 4700 images representing more than 625 institutions. When you are done, you can quiz yourself with educational games and enjoy visual games and optical illusions. It is still a work in progress, with plans for new pages on monacles and the history of telescopes to be added in the near future.

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3. The On-Line Museum and Encyclopedia of Vision Aids. Antique Spectacles and Other Vision Aids Web site. <http://www.antiquespectacles.com>. Accessed September 23, 2008.