(NEW YORK, May 12, 2009) Columbia University Libraries has launched the “Historical Corporate Reports Online Collection,” an online library of selected primary source materials of interest to a wide spectrum of researchers, including corporate anthropologists, social and business historians, and economists.

"Historical Corporate Reports Online Collection” (available at www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/business/CorpReports.html) offers approximately 770 digitized reports (ca. 17,300 pages) documenting 36 New York City-based companies drawn from the Columbia Business Library’s extensive collection of historical corporate annual reports. Selected corporations in the digital collection include department stores, utility companies, banks, and railroads ranging from the 1850s through the early 1960s.

"Historical annual reports are an essential tool for both business and financial historians,” said Charles Calomiris, Henry Kaufman Professor of Financial Institutions at Columbia Business School, "I am so pleased to have access to this digitized collection as it provides important information to researchers.”

The online reports complement the library's larger, unique research collection of historical annual reports. The majority of these reports predate the 1934 Securities Exchange Act which regulated and standardized reporting. The reports were written for and disseminated to stockholders and the public. While many reports were published, there was no requirement that they be produced or adhere to a particular format. The 4,482 corporations whose reports comprise the full collection represent most of the industries that were instrumental in the creation of early industrialized America.

The “Historical Corporate Reports Online Collection” is a joint effort of the Columbia University's Watson Library of Business and Economics, the Preservation and Digital Conversion Division, and the Libraries Digital Program Division.

Columbia University's Watson Library of Business and Economics is one of the largest collections in the United States for the study of management, finance, economics, industry and related fields. The library's collection reflects the Business School's and the Dept. of Economics' emphasis on the economics of developed and developing nations, international business conditions and practices, global trade, emerging markets and international securities trading. www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/business/index.html

Columbia University Libraries/Information Services is one of the top five academic research library systems in North America. The collections include over 10 million volumes, over 100,000 journals and serials, as well as extensive electronic resources, manuscripts, rare books, microforms, maps, graphic and audio-visual materials. The services and collections are organized into 25 libraries and various academic technology centers. The Libraries employs more than 550 professional and support staff. The website of the Libraries at www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb is the gateway to its services and resources.