The Rev. Edward R. Udovic, C.M., a leading Vincentian scholar as well as senior executive for university mission, secretary of the university, vice president for teaching and learning resources, and an associate professor of history at DePaul, spearheaded the university’s successful effort to become the premier international site for Vincentian studies. He could not have done the work without the Internet, he says. “The sheer number of items available 24/7, through online marketplace resources such as the Advanced Book Exchange, eBay and Amazon.com, is a great advantage,” Udovic says. “Searching is easy and so is purchasing—as you might expect from an online source.”

Under Udovic’s direction, DePaul’s Office of Mission and Values, the Vincentian Studies Institute of the United States (which has been part of DePaul since 2007) and the John T. Richardson Library’s Archives and Special Collections Department have gathered a large array of library, archival, special collections, material culture, and art resources into an integrated collection. The collection includes thousands of items that are accessible to all those who have an interest in the heritage of the university’s patron, Saint Vincent de Paul. The use of these resources is increasing exponentially.

“One interesting area, which constitutes the core of the large Vincentian research library, was created around what is called “Saint Vincent’s reading list.” Combining the saint’s writings, scholars identified works that would have been on Saint Vincent’s own reading list. Udovic purchases these volumes in editions from the saint’s lifetime—if not the exact edition Saint Vincent notes in his writings—as they become available through online bookellers. A recent find for the “reading list” is a 1635 French edition of a treatise on missionary work that would have been on Saint Vincent’s own reading list. Udovic is currently digitizing these items with the hope of making them available online.

“Studying our collection of several thousand holy cards of Saint Vincent de Paul, their iconography, and their accompanying prayers, for example, gives a clear insight into the essence of the devotional identity of Saint Vincent de Paul within Roman Catholicism,” says Udovic.

The university soon will launch a digitized repository of Vincentian texts on its institutional digital repository, Via Sapientiae (via.library.depaul.edu). This site will eventually make hundreds of thousands of pages of Vincentian manuscripts, documents, and books in the university’s collection accessible for study by anyone, anywhere in the world.

“In addition to the digitized Vincentian postcard site, another Web site in the planning stages will make it possible for the university to create a virtual Vincentian museum with online exhibitions featuring its collections. These will then be linked to online Vincentian courses and other Web-based continuing education opportunities,” Udovic says.

The Internet marketplaces also have made a difference on DePaul campuses. A large number of original and rare Vincentian artifacts—paintings, historic prints and antique statues of Saint Vincent de Paul—have been located and purchased by DePaul’s Office of Mission and Values. These artifacts are now on display throughout the university and serve as a visual enhancement of our institutional identity and values.

“Without the Internet revolution, creating such collections would have been time-consuming and difficult, if not impossible,” says Udovic. “Yet in the end, by themselves, these Internet sites are just collecting tools and the collections just interesting objects. However, the professional use of these tools and the resulting accessibility, study, interpretation and scholarship that result from having such a wide and integrated collection provide the university and its Vincentian Studies Institute an unparalleled opportunity to advance Vincentian Studies, which, in the end, advances the Vincentian mission at DePaul University and elsewhere at the dawn of the 21st century.”

For a guide to Vincentian art at the Lincoln Park or Loop Campus, visit depaul.edu/magazine.