Designing a Database-Driven Digital Edition with Omeka

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**Metadata Instead of Encoding**

Using a database-driven digital edition means that most of your editorial work is captured in metadata. Editors store information in fields, entered in a consistent and precise manner. We create relationships between data fields to build a complex description of our documents and other data. What do we give up?

- Encoding every mention of a personal name in the letter gets you to the exact spot it appears. They are then linked to a "personography," an XML file with all the names.
- Using Omeka Item Relations, a database tracks the relationships to other documents, people, organizations, events, and publications. It doesn’t track where in the letter the name appears.

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**Identifying People with XML Encoding**

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[Website link: http://www.example.com/personography and DPLAplus](http://www.example.com/personography and DPLAplus)

Using Omeka Item Relations

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**Think about the things that you need to track for each document, whether for administration, research, organization. Those should be discrete data fields.**

- Name(s)
- Birth and death dates
- Biographical data
- Occupations
- Tags
- Rights data
- Locations
- Bibliographic data or links
- Images

Metadata can also keep track of the status of a digital item in your edition. At the Jane Addams Papers, we track transcription, metadata and research status, copyright permission and repository rights, so that we know when a document is ready to be published. We also track the names of the staff members who work on the records.

**Transcription Status**

- Starts as Pending
- Student or editor enters it (Complete)
- Proofreader proofreads it (Proofread)
- Editor checks it (Ready to Publish)
- Editor decides to publish (Published)
- "Restrained" prevents us from publishing it.

**Benefits of Administrative Metadata**

- We can get figures on document status.
- We can search for documents ready for publication.
- We can find documents that have some hindrance to publication.
- We have options to publish metadata record, image, and transcription independent of one another.

**Designing Metadata**

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**About Omeka**

Omeka Classic is a web publishing platform for sharing digital collections and creating media-rich online exhibits. It allows editors to create complex narratives and share rich collections, adhering to Dublin Core standards.

Omeka 5 is a next-generation web publishing platform for institutions interested in connecting digital cultural heritage collections with other resources online. Create and manage many sites with streamlined installation, publish items with linked open data, and describe items with DPLA-ready resource templates.

Omeka was developed by the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media at George Mason University. It is server-based, open-source, and free to use.

[Website link: https://omeka.org/classic/directory/]

Plugins Expand Capacities

You do not have to reinvent the wheel. Omeka has a number of plugins that can add functionality to your edition. If you want to display documents on a map, use the Geolocation plugin; if you want to add crowdsourcing, use Scripts; to create digital exhibits, install Exhibit Builder. Designing a new plugin, or improving one that is already available enables us to share improvements and new development with others.

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