Designing a Digital Edition using Metadata and Omeka

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The Development of Digital Documentary Editing Platforms – April 2018
Edition Design

Transcriptions
Translations
Relations between docs
Search and browse by date, subject, type, author, etc.
Archival Collections

People, Organizations, Events
Map-based views
Packaged exhibits
Public engagement, via crowdsourcing
Teaching materials

We want it all!
Choosing a Platform

- How easy is it to use for data input?
  - Editors, student workers, possibly volunteers, teachers.
- How easy is it to use for quality control?
  - Proofreading encoded content is difficult.
- How easy is it to publish to the web?
  - Can we pick and choose which documents to publish easily?
  - Do we have to rely on programmers?
- Is it open-source?
  - We want any development work we do to be accessible to all.
  - Is there a possibility of building shared editions using a common description format?
- Can it be migrated?
  - My experience with TEI-based digital editions was not good.
Using Metadata

- Metadata is less precise than encoding.
  - Encoding every mention of a personal name in the letter gets you to the exact spot it appears.
  - Using Omeka Item Relations indicates that a specific person was mentioned in the letter.

That silly man <name ref="http://www.example.com/personography.xml#DPB1" type="person">David Paul Brown</name> has suffered
If you want to do fancy, complex transcriptions, database-driven editions are probably not for you.

- Mouse-over alternate readings
- Encoding marginalia and changes of hand
- Marking up individual characters or parts of speech for later text analysis

Lastly, That, upon his solemn oath to observe all the above articles, the said man-mountain shall have a daily allowance of meat and drink sufficient for the support of

<choice>
  <sic>1724</sic>
  <corr>1728</corr>
</choice> of our subjects, with free access to our royal person, and other marks of our

<choice>
  <orig>favour</orig>
  <reg>favor</reg>
</choice>.
Simpler Transcriptions

- But if the level of complexity that we have traditionally employed in print is good enough...
  - Using visual clues with typography -- strikeout, brackets, inserts, etc. These are HTML only, not encoded.
  - Combined with image of original, can we accept simpler transcriptions?
  - What do we lose?

newspapers that the sentence should be [omitted] <eliminated>. His spoken address was most unequivocally in favor of woman's suffrage and the Senate document therefore was not <printed from a> "revised and certified" <edition> but the <a> first draft. After all mention his not printed or spoken words of the candidate are <not> be so important as the platform to which Col. Roosevelt and the new party was pledged and upon which the campaign must be made. <Mrs. Harper admits was most satisfactory in its advocacy of equal suffrage [page 2]
Using Omeka for a Digital Edition

- Captures all the metadata we wanted.
- Extremely easy for students and staff to work in.
  - Dublin Core metadata standard
  - Entry forms are clear and easy to use.
  - HTML options for styling text allow typography to carry meaning.
- Free to use (server required), though customization requires consultants.
Using Omeka for a Digital Edition

- Modules work together seamlessly.
- Adds complex functionality, like maps, by simply entering addresses.
- Item relationships allows us to build a complex web of people, documents, organizations and events.
Designing Document Metadata

What’s important?

- Author/Recipient
- Dates
- Titles
- Types of documents
- Repositories
- Locations
- Subjects and tags
- Names mentioned
- Organizations mentioned
- Places mentioned
- Events mentioned
- Relating documents to drafts and enclosures
What’s important for people, organizations and events?

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

- You don’t have to build it from scratch.
  - You choose the plugins you want to use.
    - Item Relations
    - Geolocation
    - Exhibit Builder
    - Develop your own
- You can publish using free themes
  - Develop your own
- You can add functions piece by piece
  - Exhibits
  - Crowdsourcing
  - Develop your own
- Robust community of users