Building Custom Collections: Unique Digital Resources for Learning & Research

Genna Duplisea, Archivist & Special Collections Librarian
Alicia Vaanderling, Education and Instructional Design Librarian
Workshop Agenda

- Overview of terms
- Introduction to media management system Shared Shelf
- Description of Shared Shelf’s current and potential uses
- Cataloging demo
- Introduction to digital exhibit software Omeka
- Exploration of uses of Omeka
- Brief overview of copyright in digital collections
- Guidance on how to get started with planning an Omeka site
- Questions
- Survey
Concepts

Digital Scholarship
the enhancement of scholarship through use of digital technology

“Digital Scholarship’ is defined as any scholarly activity that makes extensive use of one or more of the new possibilities for teaching and research opened up by the unique affordances of digital media. These include, but are not limited to, new forms of collaboration, new forms of publication, and new methods for visualizing and analyzing data.”

— University of Washington

Digital Humanities (“humanities computing”)
the intersection of computer science with hermeneutics – interpreting texts, art, and other expression

“Digital humanities” implies humanities-based research, teaching, and intellectual engagement conducted with digital technologies and resources. The use of these technologies may be prosaic (e.g., using new media to conduct humanities research or enhance teaching) or transformative (e.g., developing wholly new products and processes that transform existing knowledge and create new scholarship).

— Diane M. Zorich
Platforms

Shared Shelf (JSTOR Forum)
• Media management system created and hosted by Artstor
• Cloud-based service to which the library subscribes
• Offers global publishing or local access collections
• Currently in transition but without service interruption

Omeka
• Open-source tool for publishing digital exhibits
• Available as a hosted service or as software installed on local server
• Can interact with other services like Shared Shelf
Processes

Digitization

The process of transforming analog material into binary electronic (digital) form, especially for storage and use in a computer. [...] ‘Digitized’ is used to distinguish materials that have been transformed from the media in which they were created from materials that are born digital. Digitization is distinguished from 'data entry', which is the process of typing textual records, often in forms designed to facilitate the process, into a computer system.

— Society of American Archivists

(Most of the examples we’ll discuss involve digitization, but one could use either platform for born-digital materials as well.)

Cataloging

1. The process of providing access to materials by creating formal descriptions to represent the materials and then organizing those descriptions through headings that will connect user queries with relevant materials.

2. The process of providing such access, plus additional work to prepare the materials for use, such as labeling, marking, and maintenance of authority files.

— Society of American Archivists

(Therefore, cataloging is a data entry process.)
Why Shared Shelf?

- Needed platform for describing large numbers of items in UASC as batches
- Preferred customizable metadata schemas
- Wanted a collaborative platform
- Found cataloging screens in Shared Shelf to be very user-friendly and conducive to efficient image cataloging – during our trial, we cataloged over 400 images in a month
Current Uses

University Archives Photos
Photographs of people, events, etc. from the University Archives, cataloged in Dublin Core

Property & Architecture Images
Photographs and drawings of buildings, architectural features, and cultural landscapes on campus, cataloged using VRACore
Potential Uses

• Digitizing historical materials for use in the classroom
• Organizing and cataloging materials created during original research, and potentially publishing those materials
• Records management
• Creating portfolios or digital exhibits of student work
Demo:
Cataloging Images in Shared Shelf using Dublin Core

Shared Shelf login