Coffee & Code:
Creating digital exhibits with Omeka

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GitHub.com/BCDigSchol/coffee-code

Today's session

- Overview of Omeka
- Metadata! Or, describing items for digital collections
- Exercise 1. Describe an item
- Exercise 2. Create an item record in Omeka

Overview of Omeka

What kinds of resources can you create in Omeka?

Items: individual descriptive metadata records, or building blocks

Collections: groups of items

Exhibits: curated items with deep contextualization, essays, or teaching materials

Pages: additional web pages, e.g. 'About' or 'Credits'

For examples of each, see Stark & Subtle Divisions: A Collaborative History of Segregation in Boston.

Questions to ask yourself while planning

What are the primary goals of the website?

Who is the primary audience of this website?

What sections will this website include?

What will I do with items in this website?

See the Omeka Classic User Manual for these and other questions to ask yourself while conceptualizing your digital exhibit.

Metadata! Or, describing items for digital collections

Metadata and its nature

Analytical Bibliography — A listing of works that indicates in precise details the name of the author, the exact title of the work, and publication details, and that emphasizes the material nature of the work, including the format, the pagination, typographical particulars, illustrations, and other characteristics, such as the kind of paper and binding.

Society of American Archivists glossary

Metadata and its uses

1. **Short and sweet** (mostly — what about 'Description'?)
2. **Uniform** (mostly — what about author name ambiguities? 'Condition'?)
3. **Linkable** (mostly — not all metadata is usefully linked)
4. **Useful** (mostly — different metadata fields have different audiences)

What are you describing?

Boston landmark?

Photo of the Boston landmark?

Digital file of the photo of the Boston landmark?

To describe an item, ask yourself?

What is is the item **of** ?

What is the item **about** ?

2 kinds of descriptive metadata

Fields — the buckets into which you place your description, e.g. 'Title' or 'Subject'

- Which are required? Which recommended?

Values — the items you place in the bucket

- Will you use title case or sentence case in titles? Supplied information in brackets?
- Are you going to draw your subjects from a limited list of terms so that you don't use two different words to describe the same thing?

The upshot? Be consistent across records!

Today we'll focus on item description

Which of the <u>Dublin Core Metadata Initiative's Element Set</u> apply to your item? Remember that you don't have to use all of them.

Some elements require decisions about the extent of explanation and context your metadata will provide, as in the 'Description' and 'Relation' fields.

Other elements, such as 'Date', call for straightforward, factual information—but there are exceptions here!

Birds in Space, briefly

What separate demands do Constantin Brâncuși's sculpture *Bird in Space* and a photograph of that sculpture make of metadata?

images from the Museum of Modern Art and Kettle's Yard, University of Cambridge

Exercise 1.
Describe an item

Exercise 1: Describe an item

Drawing upon the <u>descriptive text</u> provided, describe one or both items below adhering to the structure of the <u>Dublin Core metadata elements</u>. Create your description(s) using the provided <u>worksheet</u>.

Portrait of Paul Revere

John Singleton Copley

Sons of Liberty punch bowl

Paul Revere

Exercise 2.
Create an item record in Omeka

From items to collections: in theory

The **most useful organizing properties** for information resources are those based on their content and meaning, and these are not directly apparent when you look at a book or document . . .

The **most effective organizing systems** for information resources often are based on properties that emerge from analyzing the collection as a whole.

The Discipline of Organizing, ed. Robert J. Glushko, p. 15

From items to collections: in practice

What connections among items do you want to create?

How would you create these connections through metadata?

Demo

Creating an item record in Omeka.net

Exercise 2: Create an item record in Omeka

Create an item record based on the first exercise, but making any revisions after our discussion.

You may also draw upon the metadata records for these items created by the Museum of Fine Arts:

- [Paul Revere](#) by John Singleton Copley
- [Sons of Liberty punch bowl](#) by Paul Revere