Dev Report #2

This dev report covers a comparative overview of the four web-based tools we were asked to explore this week. I highlight the experience, basic features, and metadata usage within all. Ultimately, I argue that Blogger and Wordpress are the most useful as far as accessibility and intuitive design while Omeka has the best use of standardized metadata, hence its use in projects like UNL Campus Archaeology.

Through the free option, Blogger offers users a site to build individual blogs, with 15GB of storage space. Through Blogger, users can choose a series of layouts (both free and ‘premium’) which you can customize through a series of add-ons, themes, and features. Blogger uses the drag-and-drop mode of blog creation, which is one of the most accessible and intuitive form of website creation, as it involves no form of coding. The various add-ons (inserting picture, social media handles/streams, blog stats, comments, etc…) are wide-ranging and because of this, the ‘story’ that the creator wants to tell is totally customizable and can appear complex, even when the building of it is simple and straightforward. These add-ons also determine how metadata appears and is used on the blog – for instance, users can implement structural metadata by including an add-on that organizes blog by date, title or various other markers. Users can also include descriptive metadata by adding captions to photos, features, and more. Overall, the advantages of Blogger includes its accessibility, wide-range of customization, and initiative design. The disadvantages includes lack of standard metadata, and a storied experience that cannot be directed through certain click throughs, but rather how the audience chooses to move through blog features themselves.

Meanwhile, Wordpress offers users on 3GB of storage space for a site to build individual blogs. In many respects, Wordpress is nearly identical to Blogger in that it includes drag-and-drop customizable layouts with intuitive design, and various forms of add-ons that shape and determine the way metadata is displayed across the blog. However, unlike Blogger, Wordpress feels a lot more corporatized, in that the sign-up process tries to push users to choosing the non-free option again and again, and it the ‘free’ option offers the smallest amount of storage space of any of these tools. Additionally, many of the pre-made layouts are already filled with texts and images, so part of the work of building your blog is undoing the prefab work. Overall, the advantages and disadvantages are similar to Blogger, with the good being the accessible, intuitive, and customizable design and the bad being the lack of standard metadata.

Flickr offer the largest amount of storage space, with its free option, 1TB in total. I found this interesting because at a basic level, Flickr is the least customizable of all these tools, because it is merely for photos. Users can upload photos, which they can include through a series of albums and collections, creating standard metadata for the photos like descriptions, geotags, general tag, categories, etc…This makes the discoverability relatively easy, and creator data fairly standard. This is a clear advantage for those looking for standard way to store, share, and analyze photos, and I think it is an especially useful tool for professional photographers. However, as a whole I found the disadvantage of Flickr is that is wasn’t very streamline and the singularity of one medium makes telling a more interactive story impossible. I think many users would prefer the more widely used and similarly built app, Instagram.

Finally, Omeka is clearly the most professional of the four, with very specific and standardized metadata creation and usage across the board. Omeka allows users up to 500MB of space to upload a large variety of items. This is similar too, yet different than the add-on features of Wordpress and Blogger because it gives users the ability to customize things, but unlike those two, has clear and distinct definitions of what those items mean. This makes it intuitive, as users know what functions are available on the site, but also limits what creators may interpret when putting together a ‘story’ on their website. However, despite the concrete definitions of items being a possible limiter, I think the advantages of the standard metadata system outweigh this, making Omeka the best source for DH related projects (I’m think especially oral histories and archives).

Overall, each of these tools presented a unique way of creating a story, one often contextually shaped by what information, metadata, and potential design the user may want to use.