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DigiTools

Here, I describe and assess the digital tools I discovered in my Fall 2020 Digital Humanities course. I am very thankful to our Instructor, as prior to this experience, I had no practical wisdom whatsoever on website development, digitalization, data collection and presentation.

Part 1: DIGITAL TOOLS FOR DOCUMENTING PANDEMIC —   
A COMPARISON…

In this essay, I will compare my initial experience with four digital tools that are widely available online: [Blogger](https://digitalukasz.blogspot.com/), [WordPress](https://digitalukasz.wordpress.com/), [Flickr,](https://www.flickr.com/photos/185960666@N07/albums) and [Omeka](https://digitalukasz.omeka.net/). While doing so, I will assess, among others, their user interface, particular tools offered, and accessibility by providing first-hand input from a ‘Millennial’ who has bad technology karma, compares himself to hipster friends, and is also in search for some imponderabilia.

 I belong to a small group of Millennials who are haunted by lousy technology karma. Thus, I should be a professional tester for sites like these, for if I can survive and navigate them — everyone can! Therefore, navigating Flickr is a ‘wow’ experience; when I click around on pictures of other users, they come with a ‘ton’ of metadata as well as handy copyrights information. I had a chance to use Blogger as a creator and work on some WordPress content in the past. I always found Blogger easier to navigate than WordPress and a bit fancier, but after this ‘revisit’, my attitude has changed (aging?). Blogger has given my karma a chance; I could not correctly post captions, and seeing the final product also took some time.

As a European familiar with General Data Protection Regulation, I am always suspicious of how they know all of that before I know that? The moment I uploaded my pictures into Flickr — it knew everything about them, and by default, set all visibility as public, so in the next 10 seconds, six people managed to view my face with a mask. I also got ad-s corresponding to my picture. In that sense, Omeka respected my rights with due-diligence, yet everything there is expected to be inputted manually. It gives a feeling similar to that of Wiki-sites, simple but well organized. When it comes to Blogger and WordPress, as someone said, they are “same, same, but different.” WordPress is more intuitive, especially that I still do not know where my captions in Blogger are.

Many of my friends and colleagues are self-proclaimed hipsters. So, after I posted a couple of blog entries from my overseas trip on Blogger; they did not call me for a week. Now, I know why. WordPress definitely gives this fancy-schmancy vibe. While Blogger seems like it really wants to look like ‘a teenager while being 50’. With WordPress, I can right of the bat also chose the design of the site — no surprise many local businesses use it, as WordPress offers quick ready-made design for restaurants or even NGOs. They even had some font pairing suggestions put ahead by the A.I. I like it, but then—is it too much of A.I. and too little of me? I thought hipsters are all about their ‘me…’ Moreover, I appreciate Omeka for how the citations are automatically created. Yet, when it comes to adding information such as dimension and other metadata, I wish it could be as savvy as Flickr.

To conclude, my user experience with all these sources would definitely pick WordPress and Flickr for personal use. When it comes to the professional repository of digital materials, e.g., protest paraphernalia of civil society movements in Poland, I will go with Omeka for its ‘expert’ feel. However, if I would like to disseminate specific pictures broadly, Flickr definitely would be a choice. Nevertheless, as Sadhguru says: “if you treat your tools […] with reverence, every activity will be a joyful and fruitful process”—as, in the end, it about us using them, not them using us, at least as long as A.I. would not take over… Finally, I like how Omeka uses Fibonacci’s sequence as part of its logo; some strive for perfection out there. Besides, Blogger offers the function AdSense, so the authors can make a spare change by floating their blogspace with commercials (in fact, this extension could be added to WordPress as well).

Part 2: ON THE DEEP SEAS OF <digitalization>

As in life, also in school, things get more challenging as time progresses. This week we are going on ‘deep waters’, at least for me. On this digital ocean, there will be three islands we will stop: [The Story Map (TSM)](https://storymap.knightlab.com/), [geoJSON (GJ)](http://geojson.io/), and [The GitHub (GH)](https://github.com/). We will also have time to debrief with ‘analog’ tools such as a marker and paper.

TSM’s interface looks very rudimental, in an excellent minimalistic sense. It also gives us useful tools to play around with the map, geographic marker, or background. As the name indicates, it is a tool to tell the story, and as my history teacher used to say: “there is no [his-/her-/their-]story without a good map.”

GJ, at first glance, can be quite intimidating for on the left, you have a map, and on the right, you have the <HTML code>. Old wisdom says, ‘if nothing goes right, go left’, and for that reason, as the tutorial video has taught us, we can generate the code by moving the geo-tag, marking paths, and adding files. My only wish would be a working ‘ctr+z’ function, as I keep making mistakes. The same applies to TSM, where one has to delete slides one by one. In GJ, adding a pin or clicking on any field marked opens the possibility of adding many meta-data. Also, one right of the bat (while logging in) can integrate GJ with GH.

These corporate developers from Flickr swim way too fast and do not respect the laws of the sea. But, while taking our data, they make things so much easier than those who do not… Uploading pictures to TSM turned out to be more challenging than expected as my files were too large. I miss Flickr already. While I was ‘sailing’ with my clicks around, I also discovered that Flickr has a map where one can drop their pictures and add comments, tags, and geo-tags. Coping those latitudes and longitudes from Flickr to TSM eased the work for me. I tried the same with GJ and got a place called “Long Xian” as a result… Moreover, if not for our ‘digital adviser’ Jessica, I would never know how to add a photo in GJ.

Besides, if not for Jessica again, I would have no idea how to move everything via GH to the website format. Though, I have to admit that I failed my first attempt, despite having the correct title and description, my map wanted me to be in Lincoln, NE… perhaps it is a sign?! Then ‘third time lucky’ — it worked, though I learn that I should pick a better color of my tags next time as I could not localize them myself.

Back to tradition… as “Fiddler on the Roof” teaches, tradition is a holy thing, but the changing world makes us oftentimes move far away from where we started. Yet, after ‘sailing’ with digital tools—grabbing something that is not a laptop into our hands and just freely drawing without worrying about dots, geo-markers, <HTML codes> — felt like a huge relief.

To conclude, GH’s logo is a cat. It is one of few domesticated animals that can survive in the wild. As Jaron Lanier points out as long as we are cats, we can survive digitalization. We can still smoothly go from TSM to GJ to paper and find pleasure in the latter. I imagined the next generations who might need Jessica to explain to them how to use a marker and a sheet of paper, but hopefully, I will be already sailing away from such a world.

Part 3: GAME TIME

— “Get Stronger, Not the Virus“

Covid is not a virtual but viral reality, but can be a good script for a game…

Here is the [link](https://studio.code.org/c/1204950907) to my game.

Actually, I was wondering about the use of games in political psychology research. Especially that VR is not widely accessible yet. Experiencing some games can help us measure such societal cues as altruism and trust, or recreate, to some extent, Philip Zimbardo and Stanley Milgram’s scenarios. Therefore, for that very reason, I would like to answer [Coltrain and Ramsay’s](https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled-f2acf72c-a469-49d8-be35-67f9ac1e3a60/section/10c2899a-d78c-40d2-b293-f828d3a1b3e9) question (“Can Video Games Be Humanities Scholarship?“) by saying —yes!

When it comes to [Studio Code](https://studio.code.org/s/starwarsblocks/stage/1/puzzle/15), it was fun, once I figured out (literally) all the puzzles. I titled my game: Get Stronger, Not the Virus — to hint players to its zest. SPOILERS: Since nothing goes right, also the arrows do not operate properly. In my design, the Stormtrooper is a Remdesivir, and each encounter with it boosts your immune system. However, when you touch surfaces exposed to covid, you weaken. Since there is still no vaccine available, there is no way to win this game other than staying away from the virus! In that sense, according to [the authors](https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled-f2acf72c-a469-49d8-be35-67f9ac1e3a60/section/10c2899a-d78c-40d2-b293-f828d3a1b3e9), I did create the “anti-game” far away from the beauty of [Never Alone](http://neveralonegame.com/game/). Though my intention was quite different — I just wish I could know how to program it that after collecting five doses, one wins…

Good Luck!

Part 4: “Process Narrative”

I am very thankful for the continuous feedback of my Instructor, Prof. W., as well as this coming from my peers, Abigail and Zach. Thanks to them and to this entire Digital Humanities experience, this current site has landed so far from where it [started](https://digitalukas.wordpress.com/home/). Sometimes the best way is to start over, and so I did with redesigning the site from A to Z. I remodeled Home-page into a more ‘hygienic’, coherent, and user-friendly one. The same epithets guided me along while revisiting sites on Covid-Strolls and DigiTools, as well as inspired me to create the new Contact page. All of these sites came with upgraded widgets and an accessibility tool to translate. They are also enriched with modern graphic design that is visually more appealing than the previous one (at least in my biased opinion).

Moreover, since I wanted to give justice to the very important topic of ‘de-patriarchalzing’, decolonizing, de-etc., historical and news narratives, I created a separate page titled “Our-Stories,” where I included the most recent posts.

In the new edition, I also decided to place the link to my picture collection on Flickr to the very bottom, along with the contact information and translation tool. Besides, I decided to share with my visitors links to my personal social media sites. Finally, I could archive all the written materials — available here. I hope that this site will continue growing for some time, at least until my Loved Ones and myself are vaccinated. Having all the changes implemented, I hope that this new site enables not only the user experience to be friendlier but definitely makes the author/editor experience more complete. Please share with me any feedback/comments! And, once more, Thank You for stopping by!