



HIST 5237: Issues and Methods in Public History
Introduction to the Basic Environment of Scalar
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What is Scalar?

Scalar is a digital humanities/digital public history publishing platform that was created by the Alliance for Networking Visual Culture at the University of Southern California. The [platform's creators](#) intended it to be “a model for media-rich digital publication.”

The most distinctive quality of Scalar projects is that it requires you to create a **nonlinear narrative**, instead of a linear one that people might read from front to back.

Check out the [Scalar 2 User's Guide](#) for more detailed information on how to navigate and use Scalar, as well as a comprehensive walk-through of the platform.

Who uses Scalar?

Scalar is used predominantly by scholars and academics to create public-facing projects. An example of a public-facing Scalar project is “[Unpinning History: Japanese Posters in the Age of Commercialism, Imperialism, and Modernism](#),” curated by Rika Hiro and students in the University of Southern California course AHIS 387: Later Japanese Art.

Review this example before the DITI workshop, and we'll discuss it during the session.

Getting to Know the Environment of Scalar

Scalar operates according to a series of projects called “[books](#).” How you choose to organize your Scalar book helps determine how the reader receives and interprets content. So, close attention to organization-related editorial decisions is essential to successful project development in Scalar.

When you're getting started, some of the first things you'll do will be **creating pages** and **adding media** (i.e., images, hyperlinks, etc.) to pages. This semester, you will be making pages alongside your classmates in order to contribute to a joint “book” in Scalar.



Creating Pages

Scalar projects, much like standard websites, are composed of **pages**.

Add a title, description, and text, just as you would on a web page.

Adding Media to Pages

You can embed media on your Scalar page both with and without hyperlinking it to text on the same page.

Add media that is hyperlinked to text (create text first)

Embed media without a hyperlink

You can also use Scalar to create visualizations of the different relationship between pages.

Registering for a Scalar Account:

You may register for Scalar on the Alliance for Networking Visual Culture website under the Scalar tab in the navigation menu. You must use a university-affiliated email address to sign up for an account.

Before completing your registration you must obtain a registration key. For this course, your professor will provide you with a registration key.

Once you finish creating your account, you should be able to see the books you're able to edit, or you can create new books or and existing ones.

Adam Tomasi [About Scalar](#) | [Revert Dashboard](#) | [User's Guide](#)

Account [Sign out](#)

Full name: Adam Tomasi

Email (login): tomasi.a@northeastern.edu

Website: http://

To change your password enter the following values:

Current password:

New password:

Retype new:

[Save changes](#)

Books

[Create new book](#) [Duplicate existing book](#)

Title	Role
Freedom Schools and Community Building in Boston's School Desegregation Movement, 1964-1978	Author



Creating a New Book in Scalar:

When you want to create your first book in Scalar, go to your profile and click “Create new book.”

Once you do so, Scalar will ask you to create a title and subtitle for the book. Scalar gives you three “genres”: **book**, **article**, and **project**. Be sure to select “Book”!

Key Terms

Refer to the [Scalar 2 User’s Guide](#) for more detailed information.

Structure: “Scalar content comes in two flavors: **pages** and **media**. Anything in a Scalar book by necessity falls into one of these two categories.” (see [Scalar 2 User’s Guide](#))

- **Pages:** text, specifically HTML text
- **Media:** hyperlinks, images, video, etc.

Understanding relationships among pages and media in Scalar:

Whole-Whole Relationships: “There are three ways to create relationships between **whole** pieces of content in Scalar”

- **Paths:** “A path is a linear sequence of content. You can turn any page or media file into a path simply by specifying the pieces of content it contains and their order. Any time you want your reader to experience content in a specific order, use a path.”
- **Tags:** “A tag is a non-linear grouping of content. Many websites use tags as content descriptors; ways to identify commonalities amongst heterogeneous items. Scalar tags function in a similar way, with a key difference being that the tag itself is not just a bit of text but its own full-fledged piece of content.”
- **Comments:** “A comment is content which is explicitly identified as a response to other content.”

Whole-Part Relationships: “There are [multiple] ways to create relationships between whole pieces of content and parts of other content in Scalar”:

- **Annotations:** “An annotation is content which is linked to a specific portion of a media file. Currently annotations can be created for images, audio, video, plain text files and source code.”
- **Media links:** “A media link connects a portion of the text of a page to a media file. Simply put, it’s a hyperlink to media which Scalar can use to display the media itself.”
- **Notes:** “A note is content which is linked to a portion of the text of a page. Notes are used most often like footnotes would be used in a conventional book, because when the user rolls over the link, the complete content of the note is displayed.”