Digital Publication Platforms

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About Digital Publication

Digital publication is one of the tools digital humanists use to disseminate their research and scholarship. It can mean publishing on both traditional and nontraditional Web-based platforms. Digital humanists can communicate using multi-modal channels, and create content like public data for visualizations in order to supplement their published research.

Digital Publication Platforms

There are many platforms you can use to disseminate and publish your content and research. Digital publication platforms allow researchers working across the humanities to share their research with wider audiences, foster collaboration, and rethink how public cultural institutions like libraries and museums work. In the table below, we describe a few of the options available to students and researchers, including their pros and cons. At the end of this handout, we also share links to additional information.

If you have any questions about this handout, please reach out to the NULab team (Email us at nulabinfo@gmail.com).

Short Descriptions of Some Digital Publication Platforms

Wordpress: A content management system (CMS) that allows you to host and build websites. Contains plugin architecture and a template system. Allows for ample customization.
Wix: Simplified website designer tool that allows for a variety of themes.
Omeka: A web platform used by scholars to construct and manage digital archives. Supports metadata and uploading images, annotations, and building appropriate citations/credit to creators of archival artifacts.

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GitHub Pages: GitHub Pages is a static site hosting service that takes HTML, CSS, and JavaScript files straight from a repository on GitHub, optionally runs the files through a build process, and publishes a website.
Scalar: Comprehensive multimedia web-authoring tool, recommended for robust scholarly projects that pull information from multiple media sources or aim for book-length. Open source.

Comparison Table of Digital Publication Platforms

Platform	Access and accessibility	Uses	Customization	Additional features
WordPress	Provides free domain, but hosting through Wordpress.com can be costly. There are other hosting options via Reclaim Hosting.	General public for blogs and academic websites.	Features for blogging, tagging, and categorizing. Free but some themes require a fee.	Largely used with extensive documentation for troubleshooting and guidelines.
Wix	Simple, easy user interface.	General public websites for businesses, art portfolios, and personal websites.	Web design is streamlined so the designer chooses high-level details (like theme and color)	
GitHub Pages	Does not include an intuitive user interface. Free. Relatively easy to set up from an existing GitHub repository Subject to GitHub Terms of Service	GitHub users, often coders and those experienced with software development, for websites that house projects with GitHub repositories.	Easy to directly edit your website's HTML	All items in the repository will be published on your public GitHub Pages site.

Omeka	Need to maintain consistency across terms used. Its public-facing interface presents multiple ways for users to navigate the digital archive.	Scholars, librarians, educators, and archivists for public-facing digital archiving and curation projects that require metadata.	Easy to create and update metadata using Dublin Core standards. Dublin Core standards are very flexible because all fields are optional. Keep in mind that metadata practices and standards are often inaccurate or harmful to BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities. Recommendations for inclusive metadata practices can be found on Archives 4 Black Liberation in Philadelphia's site.	Omeka offers the ability to contextualize items & bring them into conversation with one another.
Scalar	Not as metadata-rich as other digital publication platforms like Omeka. Uses a complex narrative structure.	Students and academics (a university-affiliated email address is needed to create an account). Used for collaborative, digital, scholarly projects	Allows for creating nonlinear narratives using tags and linked pages. Allows media imports from various sources, including web-based archives.	Handy plugins for maps, text annotations, and timelines, and built-in data visualizations. Has an open API for customization. Allows reader commentary.

Resources:

These resources include handouts, slides and examples of projects are useful to get more information about the individual digital publication platforms.

Wordpress

DITI resources:

- This DITI handout provides an introduction to website building on Wordpress.
- This DITI slidedeck provides best practices for website building and an introduction to Wordpress.

External resources:

- For more information about the pros and cons of using Wordpress, explore Why Use WordPress: Pros and Cons - TranslatePress.

Example Projects:

- Reckonings Project's website is built on Wordpress.
- DITI's Meet the Method blog on Wordpress is built on Wordpress.

Wix

DITI resources:

- This DITI handout provides an introduction to website building on Wix, best practices and how to set up your own Wix site.

External resources:

- Wix has a course of videos on setting up a website on its platform.

Example Projects:

- Helena Kruger, a professional illustrator, built her personal website on Wix.
- Evolve Clothing, a small boutique, built its online storefront on Wix.

GitHub Pages

DITI resources:

- This DITI handout provides useful information on hosting images on GitHub for use on StoryMap. This can be applied to digital publishing sites.
- These are presentation slides from an introductory GitHub workshop that takes the viewer through the process of creating a GitHub repository.

External resources:

- Check out About GitHub Pages from GitHub on how to use its Pages feature to create a site.
- Check out GitHub Pages - Happy Coding from Happy Coding which includes a manual on creating a GitHub repository.

Example Projects:

- The Community Archives toolkit site was built on GitHub Pages.

Omeka

DITI resources:

- This DITI tutorial provides an introduction to Omeka and Dublic core standards with a focus on digital archiving.

External resources:

- The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Library has an Omeka.net tutorial.
- Omeka has a tutorial on setting up an Omeka Classic site and an Omeka S site.

Example Projects:

- The Colored Conventions Project's archive was built on Omeka.
- The Baltimore Uprising Project has an archive on Omeka
- Round the Globe: Travel Routes of Children's Literature project collects items on the history of children's literature on Omeka.

Scalar

DITI resources:

- This DITI slidedeck provides a basic introduction to Scalar.
- This DITI handout provides an introduction to the Scalar interface.

External resources:

- The University of Southern California has a Scalar 2 User Guide built on Scalar.

Example Projects:

- The Nicest Kids in Town by Matthew F. Delmont, a book companion.
- Digital Paxton, by William Fenton, a public facing research project.
- Cuban Comics in the Castro Era by Gilbert Borrego.

Data Privacy & Copyright

- The Handout on HTML explains how to get started with HTML for website building.

- The Handout on Copyright & Fair Use provides instructions for re-publishing digital media objects, shares resources for finding content you can use, and covers best practices for using content created by others.
- The Handout on Accessibility in Digital Content shares some good starting points for ensuring that digital publications are accessible to readers with all kinds of abilities.
- The Handout on Data Privacy outlines some important considerations for using free online tools that involve signing up for accounts.