Introduction to Omeka & Dublin Core

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Workshop Agenda

- Introduction: what is Omeka and what are digital archives?
- Public Health Archives
- Review and discussion of digital projects built with Omeka
- Introduction: Dublin Core metadata standard
- Activity

All materials available here: https://bit.ly/41uvAuo

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Digital Archiving as a Practice

Traditional Archiving Practice

- Traditional archival practice was developed in 1830-1956 based on theories and methods established by François Guizot, T.R. Schellenberg, and Dutch archivists Muller, Feith, and Fruin.
  - The main defining principles of traditional archival science include:
    - "the sanctity of evidence
    - *respect des fonds*, provenance, and original order
    - the life cycle of records
    - the organic nature of records
    - hierarchy in records and their descriptions." (CLIR).

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What is Digital Archiving?

- Digital archives contain records that have been digitized (such as scanned 18th-century newspapers) and born-digital records (such as emails).
  - According to [Sam Houston State University](), there are three types of digital archives:
    - Institutional (universities, museums, etc)
    - Individual or non-profit (family records, Internet Archive)
    - Business/ for-profit (Ancestry.com, Fold3)

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Digital Archiving, cont.

- Digital archiving has several applications:
  - One is digital archiving as a technical process, focused on Storage, Data, Preservation, and Accessibility to researchers ([Shotwell & Owens](#)). In this scenario, digital archives are meant to *expand* a traditional archive and are assumed to be built for an academic/research end-goal.
  - A second concept is digital archiving as a means of digital preservation, focused on digitization, storage, description and metadata, and publication/access management. Some digital archives even collect/curate resources that were digitized by other projects!

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Critiques & Challenges

- Traditional digital archives can create hierarchies of expertise or make judgements about the archive's use.
- For example, the diagram below has made assumptions about "low expertise," an "authoritative" archive, and the end result being an "academic publication."
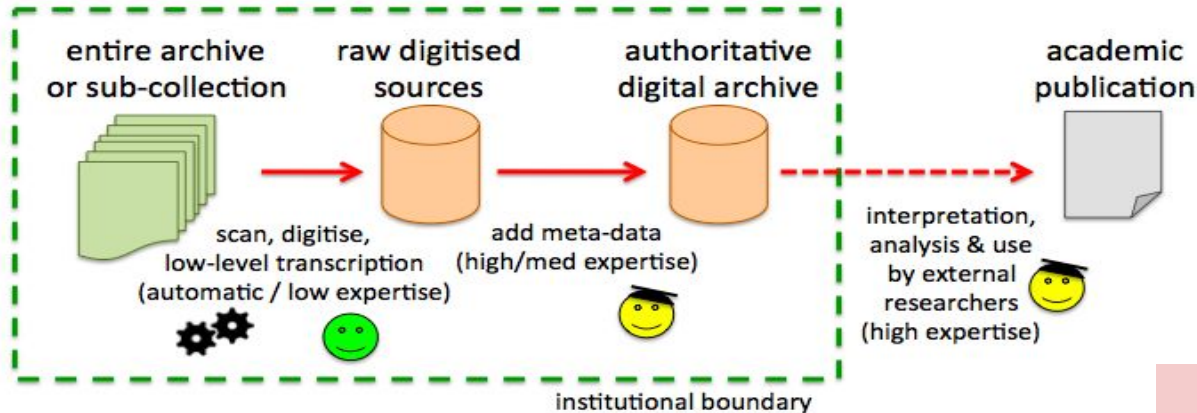
A. Dix et al., "Authority and Judgement in the Digital Archive," (Paper presented at The 1st International Digital Libraries for Musicology workshop, City University, London, September 12, 2014), https://alandix.com/academic/papers/DLfM-2014/

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Critiques & Challenges, cont.

- In addition to sustainability struggles, digital archives can create a false sense of "completeness." Choices are being made about what records are digitized, therefore, we are relying on the author/creator of the archive to give us an unbiased resource.

- Archivist Dominique Luster states, "We implicitly trust the evidence that we find in an archive, right, we see letters and photographs as the closest thing to actually being there. But we tend to overlook the biased decision making practices of the archivist or the history gatekeeper about what you found in that archive and what you didn't." ([TedX Talks, Archives Have the Power to Boost Marginalized Voices](#)).

Digital Archiving As An Activist Practice

- Though digital archives can be used in the "traditional" sense outlined earlier, they have also been used to challenge what an archive is, who/what is represented, and who has access.
- Community-based digital archives are a strong example of nontraditional archival practices. Features include:
  - Alternate power dynamics (community has control over their records, not an institution)
  - Community-centric priorities (community decides what/when/why certain records are digitized, and has active control over collective memory)

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Community Archive Models

- According to the [Community Archives Toolkit](#), there are five types of community-based archives, including:
  - Post-custodial
  - Hybrid
  - Independent
  - Community-Institutional
  - Institutional housed

ARCHIVE TYPE	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES
Post-custodial with no collection of physical materials	Creators retain records with support from archival institution	DENSHO / SAADA South Asian American Digital Archive
Hybrid post-custodial & traditional collecting	Mixture of post-custodial & traditional collecting	Community Archives Center at Tacoma Public Library
Independent grassroots	volunteer-run organization collecting materials primarily from members of a given community	INTERFERENCE ARCHIVE / LESBIAN HERSTORY ARCHIVES
Community-Institutional partnership	Community organization & a larger institution collaboration	ONE Archives at the USC Libraries / Mazer Lesbian Archives
Institutional housed & built community archives	Cross-institution collaboration while community members initiate priorities	OC&SEAA Orange County & Southeast Asian Archive Center / WITNESS SEE IT. FILM IT. CHANGE IT.

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Digital Archive Vocabulary

- **Collections:** a group of items arranged around a particular subject.
- **Exhibits**: pages created to showcase archival items or collections around subjects, to tell a story or narrative, or convey a specific message. Materials are usually accompanied by interpretive text.
- **Metadata**: a type of data that provides information about or describes data, like the fields "author," "title," and "place of publication" for a book in a library catalog system.
- **Community:** a group of people who come together based on a common factor, such as identity, religion, location, etc.

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Examples of Digital Public Health Archives

- Feel free to browse the following:
  - *Journal of the Plague Year:* [COVID-19 Rapid Response Archive](#)
  - *Learning Medicine & Biology Through Classical Art: [Cholera](#)*
  - *Popular Medicine in the Modern Era: [University of Colorado Boulder](#)*
- Things to keep in mind as you explore:
  - Why do you think a digital format was chosen?
  - What stands out to you regarding these projects?
  - How do these projects center their topics and audiences?
  - How does the project take advantage of the digital format?

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Introduction to Omeka

Introduction to Omeka

- Developed by the [Corporation for Digital Scholarship](#) (CDS), a non-profit started in 2009 at the [Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media](#) at George Mason University.
- CDS maintains and funds a host of open access tools for researchers and cultural heritage institutions including: [Zotero](#), Tropy, PressForward, Sourcery, and Omeka.

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What is Omeka?

- Omeka is a **web publishing platform** for **items**, **exhibits**, and **collections**

- Designed with scholars, librarians, educators and archivists in mind, Omeka emphasizes the role of **metadata** in **archiving** and **curation**

- Omeka offers the ability to contextualize items & bring them into conversation with one another

- Omeka makes it easy to create and update metadata using **Dublin Core** standards, a general vocabulary for describing digital or physical items

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Versions of Omeka

There are three different versions of Omeka, each with their own benefits for different types of audiences, institutions, and users.

Omeka.net: provides free and priced plan options, including support and hosting by Omeka (CDS).

Omeka Classic: built for individuals or educators where each site requires a different installation, including separate hosting (domain/URL).

Omeka S: built for institutions managing a sharable resource pool across multiple sites or other collections and resources.

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Properties of Omeka

Like other web-publishing platforms (like Squarespace or WordPress), different versions of Omeka come with customization features, like **plugins** and **themes**.

- **Plugins**: pieces of software that add new features or functionality to existing applications.
- **Themes**: foundational design of a website, including typography, color palettes, layout, header and footers, backgrounds, etc.

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Group Activity: Explore and Discuss Omeka Projects

Example Omeka Projects

Many projects use Omeka to organize, describe, and exhibit archival materials. In addition to the ones we saw at the beginning, here are a few more examples:

- *[The Individual, The Collective, and The Crisis](#)*
- *[HIV and Aids: 30 Years Ago](#)*
- *[Understanding the Scope of MMIP Crisis](#)*
- *[The Crisis in Flint](#)*
- *[Women's Mental Health during the Time of "The Yellow Wallpaper"](#)*

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Understanding the Scope of MMIP Crisis

This digital exhibit is part of a larger Omeka site maintained by the David J. Sencer CDC Museum. It addresses the Missing and Murdered Indigenous People Crisis, with subpages describing organizations & initiatives like Operation Lady Justice.

OLJ

OPERATION LADY JUSTICE

The Presidential Task Force on Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives.

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Feel free to ask questions at any point during the presentation!
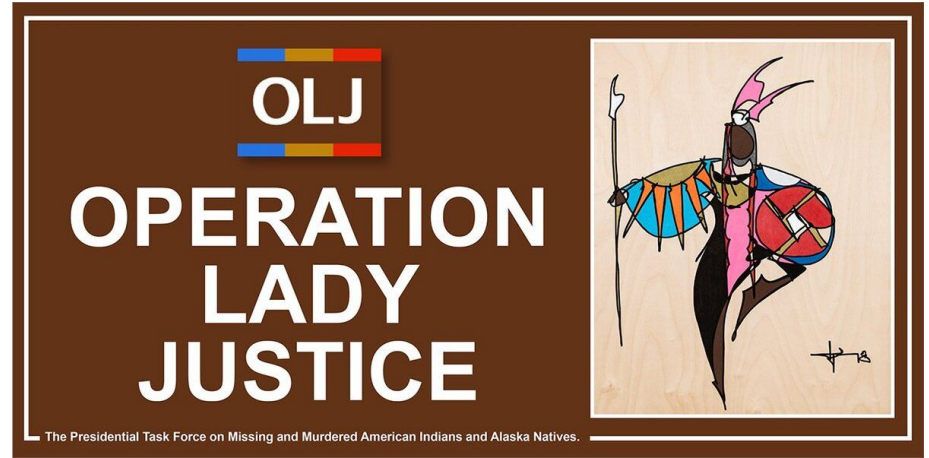
The Crisis in Flint

This Omeka exhibit is part of a larger exhibit titled "Dead Lakes, Shipwrecks, and Tombstone Towns" maintained by Central Michigan University as part of their project titled "Abundant Waters." It includes subpages and objects about the polluted water in Flint and subsequent health crisis.

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Dublin Core and Metadata Standards

Metadata Standards: Dublin Core

Metadata Standards: a shared system used by projects and institutions to structure and understand data, including principles and rules for implementing the description and categorization of data.

Dublin Core: first created in 1995, this standard includes elements to describe items in information systems and is used by many groups.

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Dublin Core Specifics

- Dublin Core was created to support open cultural heritage data.
- It is designed to be simple and flexible, which has both advantages and disadvantages.
- Fields include: title, contributor, creator, date, subject, description, format, identifier, language, publisher, relation, rights, source, and type.

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Dublin Core Best Practices

- All the fields are optional, so you can choose which you want to use to describe the items in your archive; be strategic about which fields you select!

- It is essential to have consistency in metadata fields across your items: both in which you select and in how you fill those in (for instance, you don't want to have "Firstname Lastname" in half your "creator" fields and "Lastname, Firstname" in the other half)

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Quick Demo & Activity

Back-end Demo

- How are items actually added? What does it look like to use Omeka.net?
- Demo: DITI Omeka.net practice site, https://ditidemo.omeka.net/

DITI DEMO OMEKA SITE

| Browse Items | Browse Collections | Browse Exhibits |

BROWSE COLLECTIONS (2 TOTAL)

Sort by: Title Date Added ▲

South End Sites   View the items in South End Sites

Feel free to ask questions at any point during the presentation!
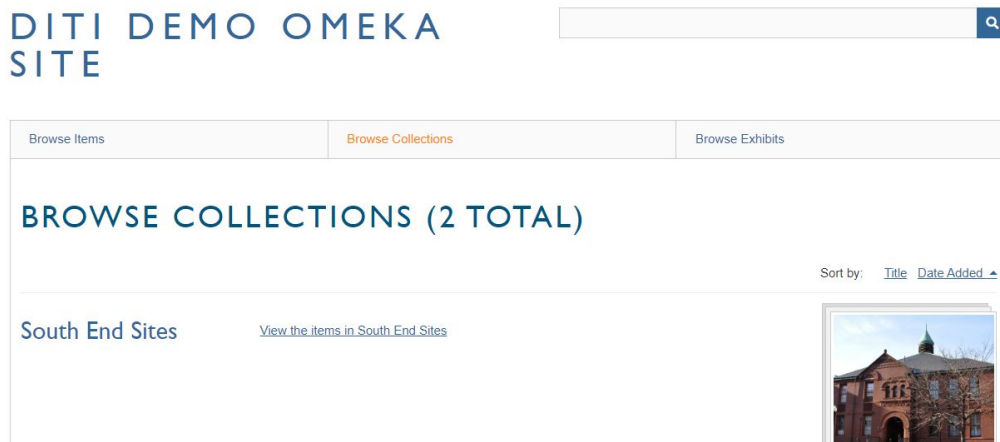
Your Turn: Digital Archival Object Description

- Based on what you've learned about Omeka, metadata, and digital archiving, create metadata for one of these objects below:
  - **Content + Language warning**: Some of these objects discuss disease and discrimination towards BIPOC + LGBTQ+ communities affected by these diseases.
  - Document: [The Presidential Commission on the Human Immunodeficiency Virus Epidemic (1988)](#)
  - Image: [Stamp Out Tuberculosis (1924)](#)
  - Artifact: [Bleeding Bowl, Ear Trumpets, And More](#) (1600s onward)
  - Audio: "[Treating Long COVID with Speech Therapy,](#)" (2023)

Your Turn: Class Website

- Now that you've created some practice metadata and objects, we are going to go through a step-by-step demo on Omeka.net

- As we work through the steps, feel free to follow along and practice by uploading your objects to the shared class website: **nineteenthcenturycholera.omeka.net**

- You should all have a collaboration invite in your email – if not, drop your email in the chat & we can add you!

Omeka.net: Steps And Terms

Key Omeka Terms

- **Items:** the individual files, artifacts, books, or discrete pieces of data added to Omeka.
- **Item Types**: categorizations given to items in Omeka that can include things like text, still image, person, email, building, etc.
- **Exhibits**: pages created to showcase archival items or collections around subjects, to tell a story or narrative, or convey a specific message in interpretive text.
- **Exhibit Pages:** website pages on Omeka for different exhibits, complete with different formats including gallery, text, file, etc.
- **Tags:** a description "marker" added to items that is used in web-based approaches for managing information across collections and exhibits in Omeka.

Creating Your Omeka Account

- Go to: https://www.omeka.net/signup
- Choose a trial plan
- Click on the activation link sent to your email
- Then, under "Add a Site," enter a subdomain name (for the URL), site title, and site description
- Once you create the site (with the trial on Omeka.net) you can't set it to private. **But** you can control whether individual items, exhibits, or pages are private. We will learn how to do that soon!
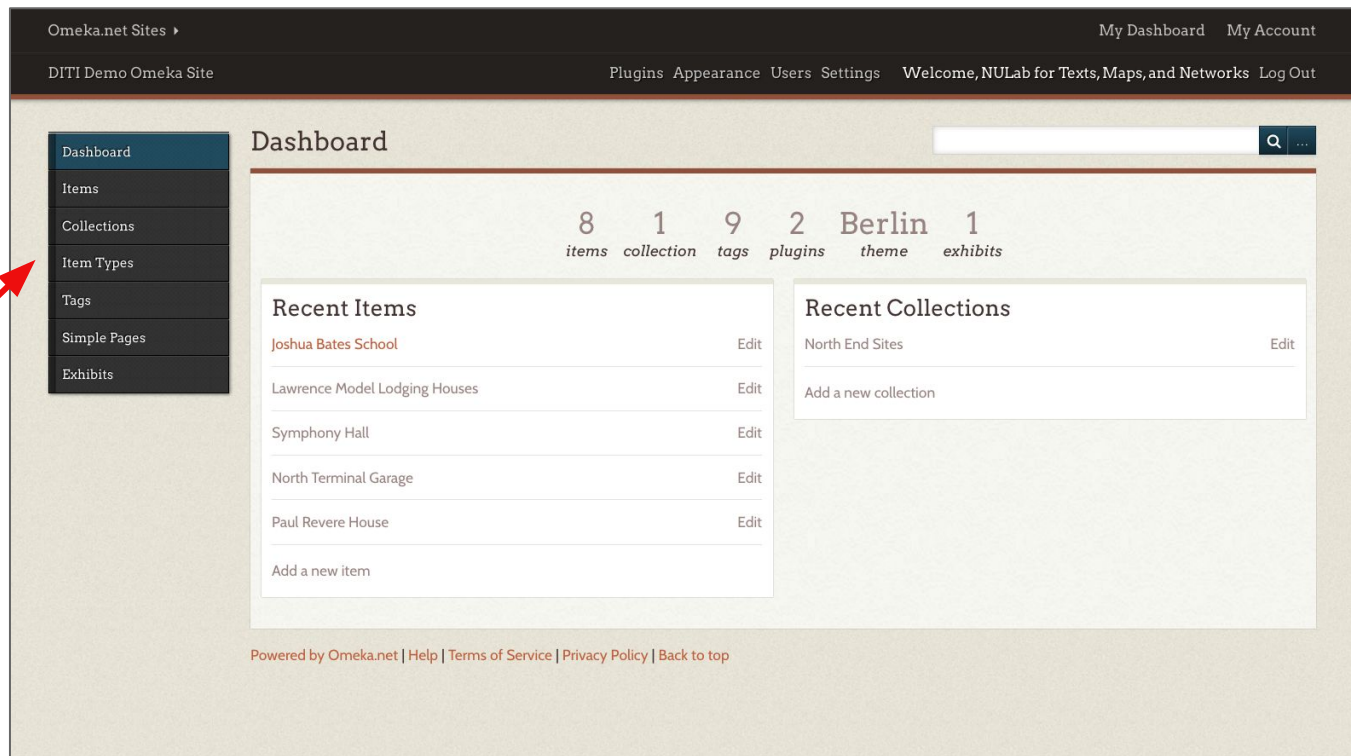
Add a Site

Subdomain Name *	DITIdemo
	.omeka.net
Site Title *	DITI Demo Omeka Site
Site Description	An Omeka demonstration site created for use in classes visited by Northeastern's Digital Integration Teaching Initiative.

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Omeka Dashboard

Navigation

Adding Items

- Under the "Items" tab, click "Add an Item"
  - You can upload multiple files for one item
  - You can choose whether to make an item public or not
  - You can edit items once they are added
- Then, add metadata!
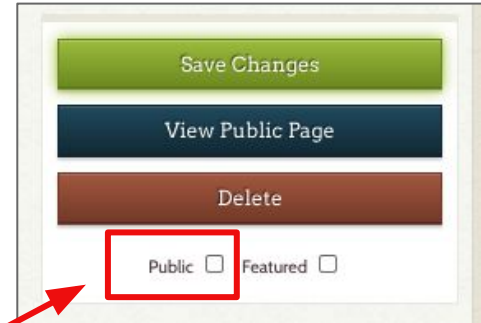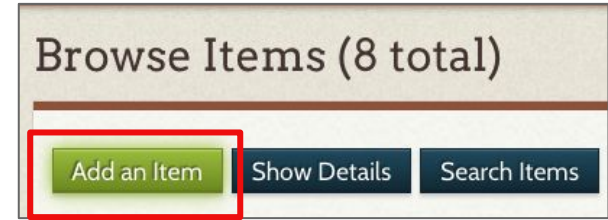
Adding Metadata

- Dublin Core vs. Item Type Metadata
  - Dublin Core is the basic information that will be relevant **across items**
  - Item Type Metadata is additional information that is likely to be **relevant for specific item types** (e.g. duration for moving images, or subject line for emails)
- You can add additional input fields (for both types of metadata)
- Formatting text in metadata fields
  - If you click "Use HTML" you will get more formatting options
  - You can also enter basic HTML to make formatting edits that are not available in the default editor; for more information on the HTML editor, visit Omeka's guide to HTML editing.

Add an Item

Dublin Core | Item Type Metadata | Files | Tags

Adding Files to Items

- You can add multiple files to an item
- If you have more than one file, you can drag the order of files to change which one appears as the key image

Add files here

Add an Item

Dublin Core   Item Type Metadata   Files   Tags

Files

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File-Specific Metadata

- You can add metadata for the **files** that you attach to your **items**
  - In this instance, the item is the Old North Church <u>building</u>, and the file attached to the item is the <u>image</u> of it
- **File metadata does not appear automatically.** Once you upload an image, you need to click "edit" to get to the metadata.

Edit file-specific metadata here

File-specific metadata

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Organizing Items: Tags and Collections

- Items can have **multiple** tags, but they can only have **one** collection
- Origin: Tagging is more of a web-focused approach to managing information, whereas collections are from physical archiving, where every item is in a single collection
- Tagging allows you to group together similar items

Adding and Editing Tags

- You **tag items** through editing an item
- You **edit tags** through the "tags" tab
- Note: Tags are not held to any standards

Edit Item #9: "Joshua Bates School"

Dublin Core   Item Type Metadata   Files   Tags

Tags

Add Tags
Separate tags with ,

Add Tags

Adding a tag
to an item

All Tags

19th century   educational

Browse Tags (9 total)

Dashboard
Items
Collections
Item Types
Tags
Simple Pages
Exhibits

Search tags   Record Type: All

Editing Tags

1   united states

1   2   3

1. To view all items with a tag, click the number.
2. To edit the tag name, click the name and begin editing, and hit "enter" to save. To cancel an edit, click the ESC key or click away from the tag.
3. To delete a tag, click the X. Deleting a tag will not delete the tagged items.

Name   Count   Date created   Record Types

1   17th century   2   18th century   3   19th century   2   20th century

1   commercial   1   educational   2   entertainment

3   private residence   1   religious

Editing tags

Editing Tags, continued

Make sure your tags are consistent!

Adding Collections

- Unlike tags, you create a collection <u>before</u> adding items to it
- Adding a collection is a lot like adding an item
  - Under the collections tab, click "Add Collection"
- Remember: items can only belong to one collection
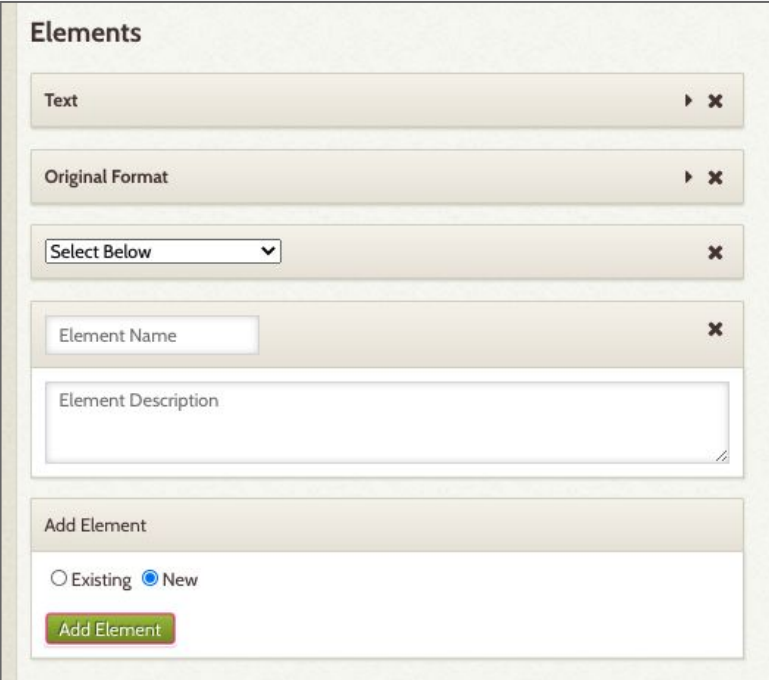- You can choose whether to make a collection public or not with these boxes

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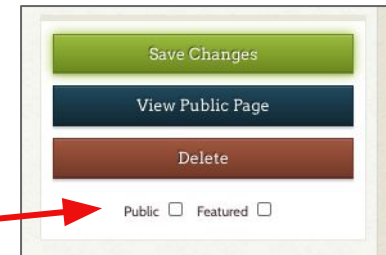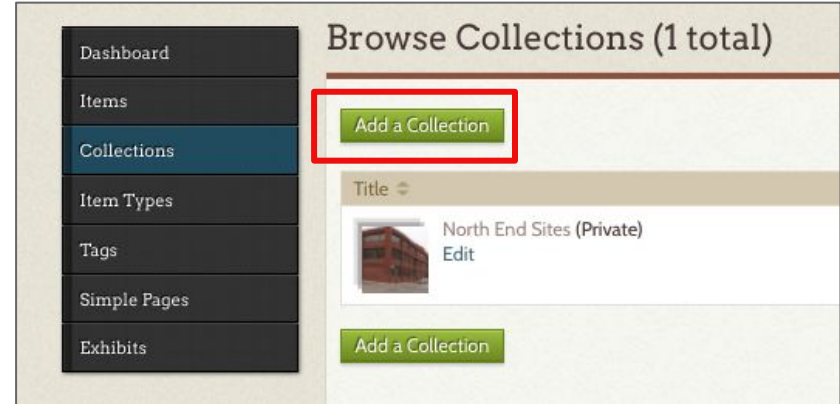
Item Types

- **Item types** are the different categorizations you can assign to an item. These include text, still image, person, email, etc.
- You can edit item types by clicking on "edit," under the Item Types tab.
- There, you can edit the **description** of an item type and its elements.
- **Elements** are the different attributes of an item type.
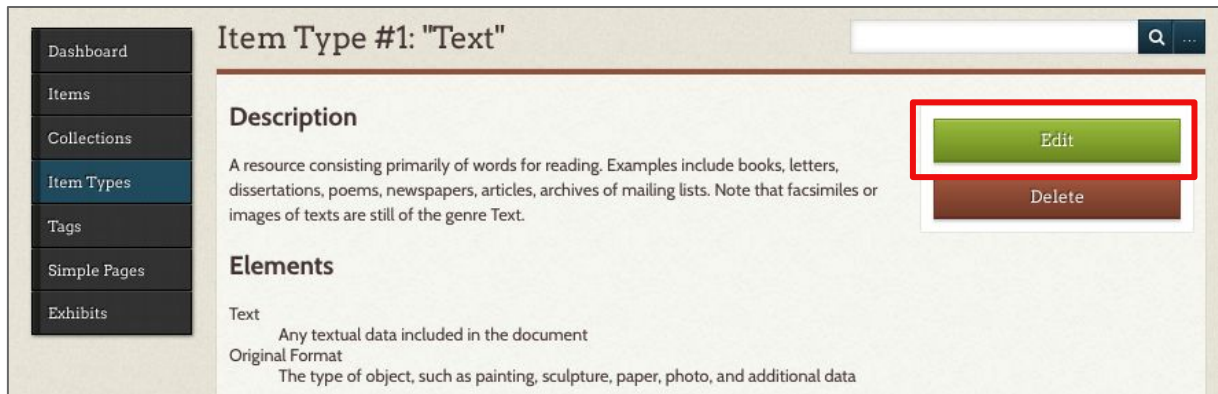
Editing Elements for Item Types

- You can add **existing elements** from a list or **create new ones**
- You can also remove the default elements for an item type (but make sure you think carefully before doing this!)
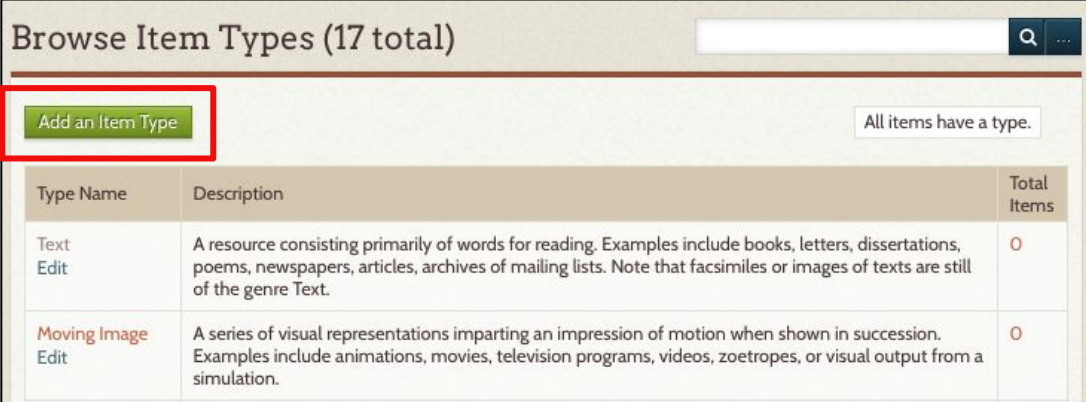
Adding New Item Types

You can add completely new item types by clicking the "Add an Item Type" button, giving the new item type a name and description, and adding elements to it (either existing or new).
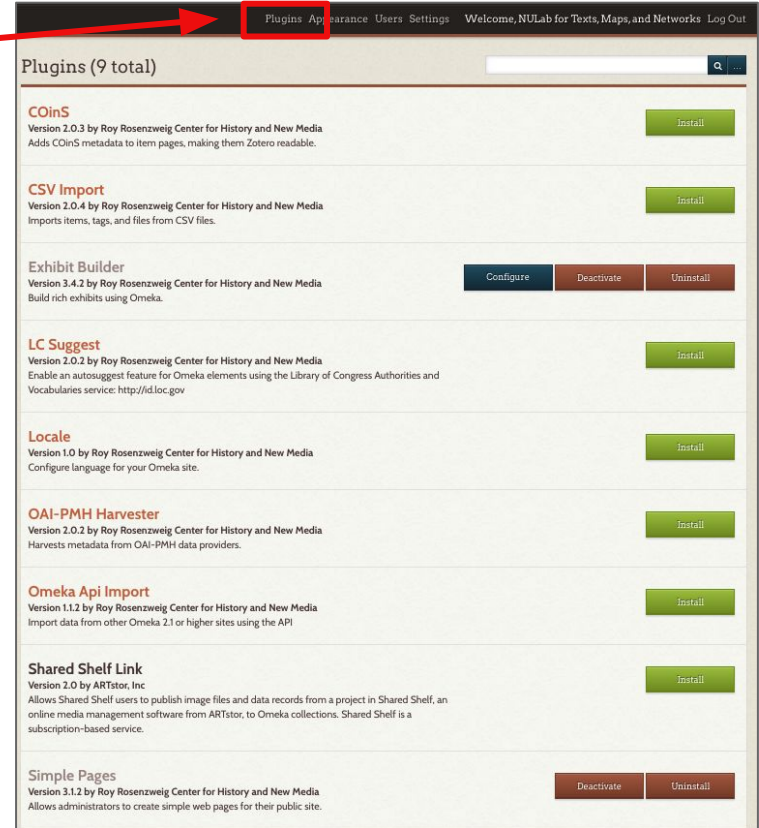
Plugins

- To create **simple pages** and **exhibits**, you first need to install these plugins
- Click "Plugins" in the top menu and install Simple Pages and Exhibit Builder

Creating Simple Pages

- **Simple pages** allow you to create web pages for your digital archive
- To add a page, click "Add a Page" under the "Simple Pages" tab. You can then add a title and edit the slug, or page URL
- You choose items for your page by entering **Omeka shortcodes** into the text box (you can also use the text box just for text). A complete list of shortcodes can be found [on the Omeka website](#), but useful ones include:
  - [items collection=1]
  - [items item_type="still image"]
  - [items tags=commercial,educational]

You can choose whether to make the page public

Establish navigation by designating parent pages and page order

This shortcode indicates that we want all items in Collection 1 to be included on this page

Creating Exhibits

- **Exhibits** are a more robust way to provide access to (and curate!) the contents of your archive. Exhibits are composed of pages (which in turn showcase items).
  - To add an exhibit, click "Add an Exhibit" under the Exhibits tab
  - From here, you can give the exhibit a title, a slug, a credit line, and a description. You can also apply tags and choose a theme and cover image, and decide what you want the starting page to be.
- **You can add existing pages to your exhibit or create new ones**
- Even when you are adding an existing page to your exhibit, you can only establish the **layout** of items on the page through the Exhibits tab

Pages

To reorder or nest pages, click and drag a page to the preferred location.

Residential Spaces   ✕

Add Page

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Exhibit Pages

- The contents of exhibit pages are organized by **blocks**
- Layout options for blocks are: file with text, gallery, text, and file.
- Once you choose your layout option for a block, you can select the items to include
- Although some of the layout options display thumbnail images, you are curating the **item, not the attached file(s),** in your exhibit
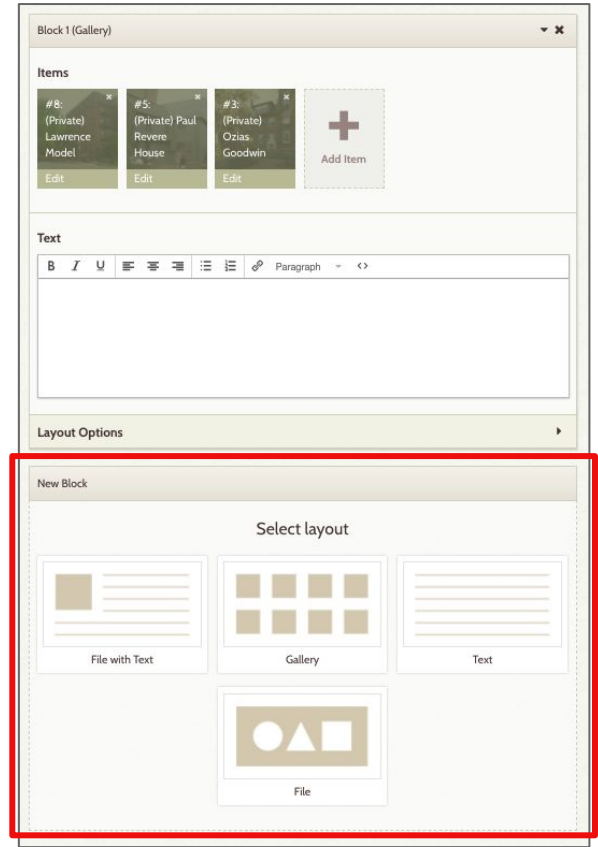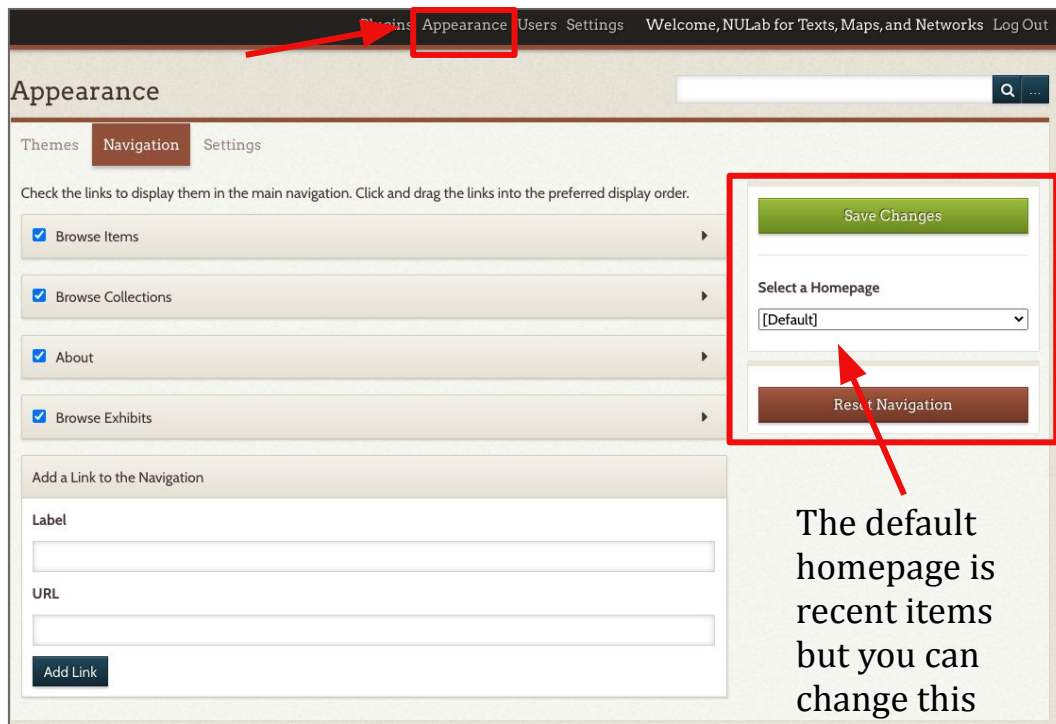
Themes and Site Appearance

Under the Appearance tab in the top menu:

- "Themes" allows you to choose a visual theme
- "Navigation" allows you to control the main menu bar
- "Settings" offers some display choices, including how metadata appears and how thumbnails work

The default homepage is recent items but you can change this

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Additional Demo

- *[Boston from End to End: NHRP sites in Boston's North and South Ends](#)*
- Note: this is a demo of Omeka basics, not an actual archive project!
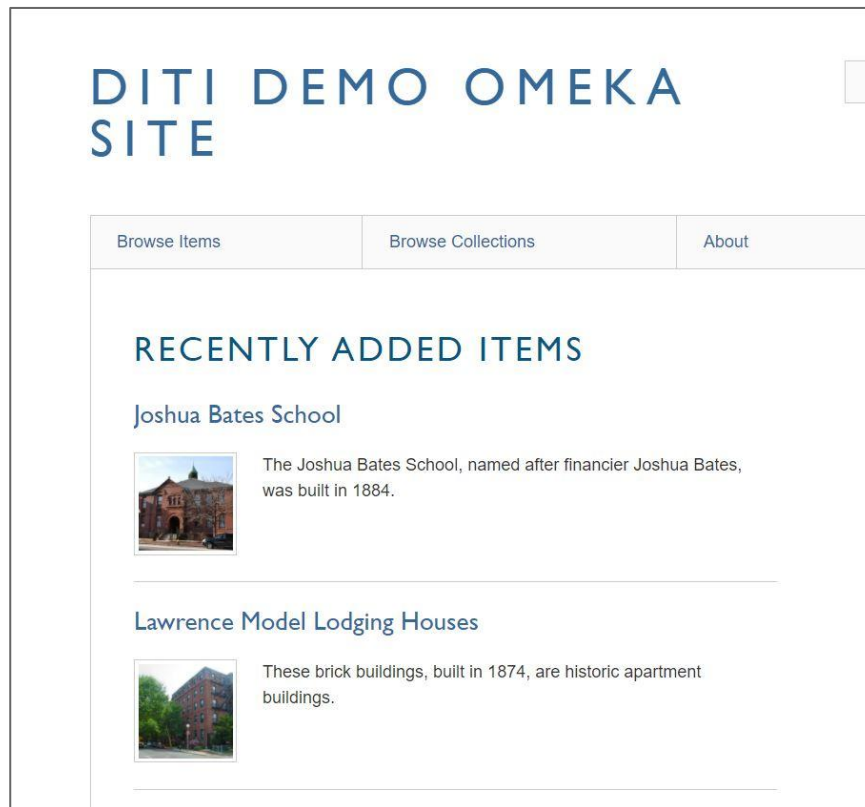
Your Turn!

Set up your subdomain and Omeka site for your account. Then, try the following:

- Adding 2 or 3 items
- Creating a collection and adding items to that collection
- Tagging items
- Editing an existing item type
- Creating a new item type

Omeka + Archival Project Best Practices

Website Hosting

- Paid versions of Omeka include **hosting** and support of maintenance on the CDS servers.
- **Omeka.net** includes a free "trial" account to build a single page with limited themes and plugins, but uses the same code as Omeka Classic; trial Omeka sites can be kept active indefinitely, there's no time limit.
- Hosting is important because it is integral to site sustainability, maintenance, domain URL, project identity.
- [Reclaim Hosting](#) is an organization used by many academics for web hosting with domain registration. They offer lower-cost hosting plans and provide helpful customer services and support.

Data Privacy and Maintenance on Omeka

- Omeka Services collects certain data about you, site visitors, and digital content stored on their platform. It is good practice to review the [Omeka privacy policy](#) to know how this data is used, stored, and managed.
- Omeka is *not* meant for long-term preservation without maintenance. Curators are responsible for updating materials on Omeka following version upgrades.

Digital Accessibility

- Omeka Classic includes accessibility features for both the front end and back end. See their [Accessibility Statement](#) for more details.
- Externally-developed themes and digital content may not be accessible for assistive tech users. Review the accessibility of your digital archive to make sure users can access archived materials.
- See the [DITI Handout on Accessibility in Digital Content](#) for more resources and tips.

Adding alt text

- Alt text is a description of an image that conveys the image content, meaning, and context. This descriptive text is attached to the image file metadata. For more information see the [Northeastern Library Guidelines](#) for alt text.
- People with low or no vision can use assistive technology like screen readers to hear the alt text description of digital images. When a screen reader reaches the image, it will read aloud the alt text description.

Adding alt text

- Fill in the Title or Description field when you add an image, sound, or video file.
- Write a description of the image. For audio and video files, write a transcript of what is said, as well as describe the content, context, and purpose of the audio or video file.
- Check out the example to the right, created by Harvard University.

Example of Alt Text with Various Contexts
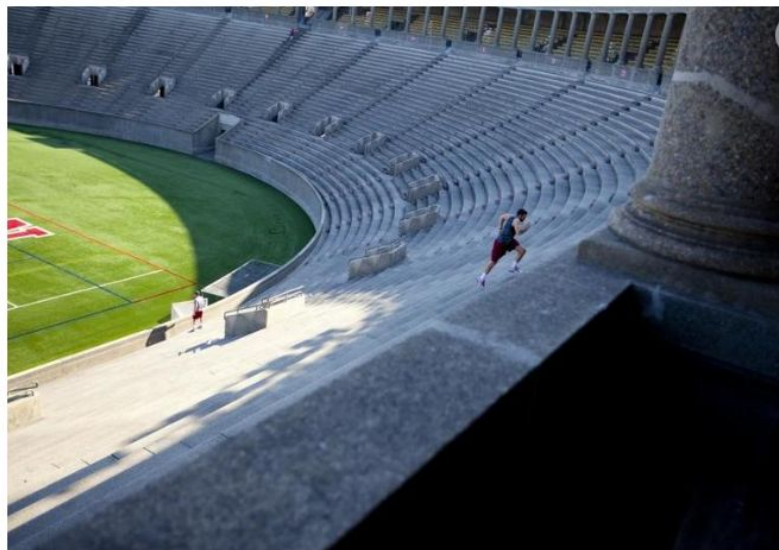
Alt-text with no context:

A mostly empty stadium.

Alt-text on a page about recent turnout for track tryouts:

Harvard Stadium with two lone runners bounding up the steps.

Alt-text on page about renovation projects:

Harvard Stadium with cracked concrete pillars.

Thank you!

Taught by: Claire Lavarreda and Sean Rogers
Developed by: Claire Lavarreda, Avery Blankenship, Ayah Aboelela, Juniper Johnson, Dipa Desai, Talia Brenner, Adam Tomasi, Sarah Connell, Patrick Murray-John, Kasya O'Connor Grant, and Sara Morrell

- For more information on DITI, please see: https://bit.ly/diti-about
- Schedule an appointment with us! https://bit.ly/diti-meeting
- If you have any questions, contact us at: nulab.info@gmail.com

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