Tech Platforms in the COVID Age

The [Corona Papers](https://benrhodes477.wordpress.com/) Post #2. To view associated images and metadata, click [here](https://www.flickr.com/photos/190032975@N06/albums/72157715997958792).

*Introduction*: For this continuation of the Corona Papers, I provide comparison among four web-based platforms: WordPress, Flickr, Blogger, and Omega. I was consistent in what material and information I was attempting to express, then observed how intuitive and easy that process was for each of the four. As was suggested, I tried to communicate my findings from DH Dev. Report #1 (which in my case was a [narrative](https://benrhodes477.wordpress.com/2020/09/02/the-andrews-protocol/) through Andrews Hall documenting coronavirus prevention measures). To test the tools and usability of each platform, I also had a few images that I uploaded to each one. Essentially, I tried to standardize the information I wanted to publish on the platform, then compared how easy it was to publish that information (while also exploring the unique features of each site). Crucially, I was interested in how easy or difficult it was to utilize metadata on each platform.

Unsurprisingly, I found Blogger and WordPress the best suited to communicating my narrative’s text component. It was easy to publish my narrative on Blogger, explicitly a platform for communicating text: I copied and pasted my narrative, titled it, then hit publish. It was almost as simple to communicate the text portion on WordPress, but there were far more and better features that I could incorporate into the blog in the form of blocks—quotes, galleries, slideshows, tables, layouts, etc. This makes WordPress the best platform for synthesizing all content (text plus everything else), though I preferred the relative simplicity of Blogger because I prefer text-based objects. Flickr and Omeka weren’t well-suited to publishing the *text* of my narrative, but they were excellent in other ways.

For Flickr, that was in the form of images. Uploading my image was easy, as was creating an album into which to place it. What Flickr alone has is the ability to look at *other* creators’ galleries quickly and easily—clicking “Explore” showed many top creators’ profiles. This makes it effective at demonstrating the true power of its services—seeing the top professional pages gives me new ideas for how to improve my own. I wish the other platforms had this as well—without the UNL Campus Archeology Project site as an example, I would have been stuck on how to organize my Omeka page.

For metadata, I was pleasantly surprised by the adaptability of Blogger and WordPress. Adding structural metadata in the form of “labels” on Blogger (I labeled my narrative under “Campus Observations”) was as easy as placing my narrative on WordPress under a “Category.” In the future when I add more posts, this structural metadata will be useful for showing how they’re organized. WordPress made it simple to add tags and I created a few of my own (“Andrews Hall,” “campus”). Unlike WordPress, though, Blogger let me add a location to the post—all I had to do was search “Andrews Hall Lincoln” and it immediately added the address for me. Having a location-adding feature would be handy when categorizing posts.

Flickr and Omeka were the best at providing avenues to utilize all three types of metadata. Every photo on Flickr can be described (descriptive metadata), grouped into collections or galleries (structural metadata), and copyrighted appropriately (administrative metadata). Furthermore, all this information is directly viewable to the public under each picture. Omeka goes even further, with every object uploaded able to be described by subject, creator, publisher, source, date, rights, physical dimensions, and more. On the UNL Campus Archeology Project site, each object is labeled with all this information and placed into exhibits, making the site very easy to navigate. I uploaded a photo to my Omeka workspace and was able to give it a variety of metadata, including placing it into a collection I titled “Campus Protocols.” I preferred Omeka ultimately because of the amount of metadata it is possible to add, as well as the opportunity to upload more than just images.

Overall, then, each platform provided its own inherent strengths and weaknesses, and it took some reflection to decide which I would use to publish my project. I finally settled on publishing The Corona Papers through WordPress and Flickr because these two platforms check every box I need: WordPress for clean text-based publishing, and Flickr for smooth image and metadata sourcing. Armed with the tools these platforms provide, the project is able to present itself critically and aesthetically.

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