# **Website Platform Basics**

**What is Web Hosting?**

Web hosting is a service that allows organizations and individuals to post a website or web page onto the Internet. A web host, or web hosting service provider, is a business that provides the technologies and services needed for the website or webpage to be viewed in the Internet. Websites are hosted, or stored, on special computers called servers. When Internet users want to view your website, all they need to do is type your website address or domain into their browser. Their computer will then connect to your server and your webpages will be delivered to them through the browser.

Most hosting companies require that you own your domain in order to host with them. If you do not have a domain, the hosting companies will help you purchase one.

**Domain Name**

A domain name is an identification string that defines a realm of administrative autonomy, authority or control within the Internet. On average, it cost $10-$15 a year to register a new domain name.

**Some features associated with web hosting:**

Email Accounts: With a domain name (e.g. [www.yourwebsite.com](http://www.yourwebsite.com)) and email account features provided by your hosting company, you can create domain email accounts (e.g. yourname@yourwebsite.com).

FTP Access: The use of FTP lets you upload files from your local computer to your web server. If you build your website using your own HTML files, you can transfer the files from your computer to the web server through FTP, allowing your website to be accessed through the internet.

WordPress Support: WordPress powers over 25% of websites on the internet. Most hosting providers will tell you right away if their plans are WordPress-compatible or not. The simple requirements for hosting WordPress websites include PHP version 7 or greater; MySQL version 5.6 or greater.

<https://www.website.com/beginnerguide/webhosting/6/1/what-is-web-hosting?.ws>

# **Website Platforms**

## **Omeka**

Omeka is a free and open-source web platform that is geared towards creating and curating online digital collections and archives. It is more exhibit and museum specific than other web platforms like Wordpress, Squarespace, etc. Omeka has three versions.

### **Platform:** Omeka S

**Description:** Omeka S is for institutions managing a sharable resource pool across a network of websites

**Technical Complexity:** A website is free to create, hosting is a paid feature, which requires linux.

**Features:**

* Resources can be shared across different sites
* Import items (author, place, artwork, oral history, etc.) and put them into item sets
* Vocabularies populate the properties used to describe items with metadata
* A set of fields to that describe items
* Modules (work like plugins)
* [Good video expla](https://omeka.org/s/tour/)nation

**Cost:** If wanting them to host, prices are graded by size of hosted installation as follows:

* 100GB $2500/yr
* 500GB $4000/yr
* 1TB $7000/yr
* 5TB $12000/yr

**Pros:**

* Designed with building exhibits in mind
* Easily tag items with information (metadata) that helps show relationships between items
* Supports rich media like photos, mapping, videos as well as annotations describing them

**Cons:**

* Tulane no longer works with Omeka
* Have to host ourselves or pay for hosting
* Less customizability with the layout

**Resources:**

* [Omeka in the classroom](https://teachinghistory.org/digital-classroom/tech-for-teachers/25115): a good read about the pedagogical advantages of Omeka in Digital Humanities education for both the builders and the visitors of the site
* [Example Omeka archive](http://aboutdeseronto.omeka.net/): this archive is an example of crowd sourced public history in the same spirit as the MGIC
* [Omeka S sandbox](https://omeka.org/news/2017/06/13/come-play-in-the-omeka-s-sandbox/): Omeka offers a “dummy” website that you can log into and see and play around with the user interface as if you were the owner of the site. You can explore the different functionalities it has or test to see if it will work for something you want to do

### **Platform:** Omeka Classic

**Description:** For individual projects and educators to share collections, media, and exhibits online

**Technical Complexity:** A website is free to create, hosting is a paid feature, which requires linux. Highly customizable, requires more management from the user (Some sources say more difficult to use than Omeka.net), requires maintenance of software updates and installation (unlike Omeka.net)

**Features:**

* Exhibit Builder
* Customize themes
* Dublin Core metadata
* Tag items with keywords
* Mapping
* Annotations
* Read the full list [here](https://omeka.org/classic/docs/GettingStarted/Feature_List/)

**Cost:** If wanting them to host, graded by size of hosted installation as follows:

* 100GB $2500/yr
* 500GB $4000/yr
* 1TB $7000/yr
* 5TB $12000/yr

**Pros:**

* adheres to Dublin Core standards with the ability to customize metadata fields
* variety of search functionality plug-ins
* hosts a site which the public is able to view for a fee/on user’s own server, if applicable
* User contribution option
* Can organize items into exhibits to encourage a reading of items in a specific narrative
* Three different themes described as particularly “image-oriented” if visual pictures want to be centered
* Highly customizable, nice drop down menu functionality, variety of themes for different purposes with different typography, many themes have different “style sheet” options with color palettes optimized for online exhibition
* Cool word cloud functionality to show the popularity of certain tags, as shown [here](https://newdeal.oucreate.com/) (near bottom of page)
* mapping potential to link items to an interactive map of a certain area
* can add a scroll through of items in exhibit on bottom.

**Cons:**

**Resources:**

### **Platform:** Omeka.net

**Description:** Omeka.net is a hosted service option for publishing digital collections and exhibits, allowing users to run Omeka Classic without worrying about installation or hosting.

**Technical Complexity:** Hosted by Omeka; reviews say significantly easier to use than Omeka Classic, sacrifices some customization for functionality

**Features:**

* Exhibit Builder
* Customize themes
* Dublin Core metadata
* Tag items with keywords
* Mapping
* Annotations
* Read the full list [here](https://omeka.org/classic/docs/GettingStarted/Feature_List/)

**Cost:**

* Plus - 35 a year
* Silver - 75 a year
* Gold - 350 a year
* Platinum - 1000 a year

**Pros:**

* Public archiving capabilities are same as Omeka Classic, “adheres to Dublin Core standards with the ability to customize metadata fields, variety of search functionality plug-ins, hosts a site which the public is able to view for a fee/on user’s own server, if applicable.
* User contribution option.
* Ability to visualize online exhibits are same as Omeka Classic with the exception that the Silver plan does not allow access to the three image-oriented themes
* Eight theme options on Silver plan, eleven (including the three image-oriented themes) on Gold, some themes have style sheet options for different color options.
* Dynamic and engaging visualizations are same as Omeka Classic, map functionality seems to be most exciting visualization

**Cons:**

**Resources:**

## **Wordpress**

Wordpress is a web platform created for blogs and websites. It has many different variations that can adapt to different situations. It is often augmented with plugins and themes in order to customize the functionality of the site based on the stie’s goals.

**Technical Complexity:**

**Features:**

**Cost:**

* Personal, $4/month, 6 GB
  + custom domain
  + unlimited access to email support
* Premium, $8/month, 13 GB
  + Advanced design tools, Custom CSS (would require knowledge of web coding to take advantage of this), Google Analytics support (good to help boost the website on google searches)
* Business, $25/month, 200 GB, Custom plugins & themes,
  + 24/7 live chat

**Pros:**

* Don’t have to worry about hosting
* Lots of storage
* Easy to use and students might have experience with it
* Tulane has a lot of resources
* Very easy to display text based content
* Has a blog feature

**Cons:**

* Not necessarily built for curation/archives
* Can be supplemented with plugins, but some cost extra and could be buggy
* Limited customizability, specifically in adding outside media

**Resources:**

* [Library Guides: How to Create an Online Exhibit: Tulane Online Exhibits](https://libguides.tulane.edu/online_exhibit/platform): resources, questions, and ideas curated by Tulane’s Howard Tilton Memorial Library that includes a Wordpress specific tutorial and general exhibit structure advice
* [Combining Omeka and Wordpress](https://swhplibrary.net/archive/digital-archive-software/): combining the two platforms allows for taking advantage of the design features of Wordpress and the archiving power of Omeka
* [A Tutorial for Online Exhibitions at the British Museum](https://wp.wpi.edu/london/projects/2019-projects-spring/british-museum/): One of many detailed outlines of the process of creating online exhibits through Wordpress
* [Culture Object: an open source WordPress plugin for getting museum objects online](https://cultureobject.co.uk/): this is a good example of a plugin that will elevate Wordpress to have more archive friendly features

## **collectiveaccess.org**

**Description:**

**Technical Complexity:** have demo here <https://demo.collectiveaccess.org/index.php/system/auth/login?redirect=https%3A%2F%2Fdemo.collectiveaccess.org%2Findex.php%2FDashboard%2FIndex>, clicking around pretty easy to use the cataloging functionality, not as clear where the website design portion is but they claim to host that using themes as well, a review from the Canadian government’s collections management department says “user friendly for doing the data entry, but the implementation, maintenance, migration, or upgrading must be done by a savvy person who will need to do a lot of reading on the software website and wiki, but support from the company is available with fees.”

**Features:**

* Public archiving capabilities: can upload objects, have opportunity to tag with an “entity” and organize objects by that entity, can organize objects into exhibits or collections, can input storage location information, can attach objects to specific events or occurrences, design public website through their software, search seems standardized rather than super customizable
* Ability to visualize online exhibits: can see pictures in a large view format, not much other visualization possibilities
* Static content aesthetics: information mentions themes for the website publishing aspect, the sample projects seem to use similar typefaces but their own color palette, typeface used b**y all** is nice and readable while staying engaged
* Dynamic and engaging visualizations: Strong linked organization possibilities for the information, does not visualize this organization in the most interesting manner

**Cost:** free but you will need to host it yourself

**Pros:**

**Cons:**

**Resources:**

## **scalar.usc.edu**

*Scalar is a platform for creating long-form, interactive archives and exhibits. It is specifically created for born-digital curations using different types of media to create a narrative*

**Technical Complexity:** claims itself to be easy to use, combines “standardization and structural flexibility” to be useful for a variety of sources, which implies a level of ease. PC mag calls it easy to use as well

**Features:**

* Particularly noticeable for its flexible structure with regards to grouping and sequencing, can make visually appealing archives, can travel through exhibits in a planned order. Blog style commenting option to further engage the public
* As mentioned below, particularly notable for unique visualization options, can make pictures larger or smaller, can see in a scrolling box or individually, easy to cite pictures and get their details straight from the website
* Static content aesthetics: options for easy page layout changes on a surface level, have the ability to go into code via CSS to more thoroughly edit the style of the presentation
* Dynamic and engaging visualizations: Have stated goal of emphasizing 21st century scholarly communication’s possibilities, I think visualizations really show that. Ton of engaging options for making connections between information more visual. Mapping feature like Omeka but also option to make an information tree, to make a web of the information, and the more complicated gridding feature. Furthermore, there is timeline functionality and an option to organize information into headings and subheadings for a more linear narrative.

**Cost:** free

**Pros:**

* Supports media as well as other graphics like interactive timelines and maps
* Made for exhibits/digital archives and DH projects
* Strong community support and user guides, including free workshops
* Can use external tools like [KnightsLab](https://pitt.libguides.com/digital-tools-primary-resource/knight-lab-tools)

**Cons:**

* Does not navigate like a traditional website with a menu, so might be easy to get lost or just browse
* Could run into storage/hosting problems (could be solved with integration with the existing MGIC site)
* Not as big and well established as Wordpress/Omeka

**Resources:**

* [Example Exhibit](https://scalar.usc.edu/works/unpinning-history-japanese-posters-in-the-age-of-commercialism-imperialism-and-modernism/index): good example of an exhibit that is more “browse-friendly” that would function more like a traditional museum
* [Example Digital Archive](https://scalar.usc.edu/works/chicanadiasporic/index): shows the many features that helps create robust archives accompanied by annotated narratives that are interconnected to allow users to do a deep dive into the material
* [Example Class Project](https://scalar.usc.edu/works/the-voyages-of-the-clarence/introduction?path=index): provides an example of scalar as a collaborative project with multiple authors

## **Github**

**Description:**

**Technical Complexity:** Requires some knowledge of HTML and some CSS, can also use Javascript

**Features:**

* resources here <https://github.com/mlibrary/online-exhibits> (this one is just Omeka but probably a lot more flexible), here <https://github.com/sul-dlss/exhibits> (based on the Stanford Library online exhibit code), here <https://github.com/jagrajSidhu/eExhibition.com> for public archiving
* Unsure about the jagrajSidhu one but the Stanford option provides [examples](https://exhibits.stanford.edu/) of existing exhibits that are visually forward
* unsure how Stanford’s code would translate to another host’s website but think that github means theming is very flexible
* Can imbed pictures in text on the Stanford one and make them bigger, github has a lot of code options if you search individually for what you want (word clouds, lots of data visualization tools)

**Cost:** free  
  
**Pros:  
  
Cons:  
  
Resources:**

## **exhibits.tulane.edu (Wordpress)**

**Description:**

**Technical Complexity:** Wordpress software is easy to use, might have limited capabilities

**Features:**

* Websites already on Tulane exhibits page display somewhat content to the public, for public archiving
* Can organize into subsections, can make pictures large and a significant portion of the page if desired for visualizing online exhibits
* Option for KnightLab Storytelling tools, including frame comparisons, VR stories, inline audio, timeline, maps, and storyline, all of which look nice in the other existing exhibits

**Cost:** free

**Pros:**

**Cons:**

**Resources:**

## **Collection Builder**

*Collection Builder works by uploading a CSV (a file similar to an excel spreadsheet) with images, documents, and other media and metadata describing them to a site that can be hosted for free on GitHub, a popular code repository and sharing site.*

**Technical Complexity:**

**Features:**

**Cost:**

**Pros:**

* Designed for learning and to be approachable for beginners
* Good introduction to minimal computing
* Extensive documentation, tutorials, and videos
* interactive maps using leaflet
* auto-generated timelines
* search- and subject-based browsing
* tag clouds for subjects, locations, or custom fields

**Cons:**

* Requires use of GitHub, which can be overwhelming/big learning curve
* Not customizable design-wise
* Not as big and well established as Wordpress/Omeka

**Resources:**

* [Collection Builder example](https://collectionbuilder.github.io/collectionbuilder-gh/): this is the demo site that explains and showcases the many features of collection builder
* [GitHub Repository](https://github.com/CollectionBuilder/collectionbuilder-gh): provides a peek into a mini-comp code repository (it looks scary but nearly all the code is written for you - all you have to do is follow the instructions to upload your dataset)
* [How I think about Omeka, CollectionBuilder, and Wax](https://gist.github.com/mnyrop/cd7e4e9338913ffcf8e1a47e012b5732): good advice comparing different minimal computing (minicomp) platforms from an expert
* What metadata do we want to include?
  + Do we want article descriptions/annotations?
  + How to deal with titles and subtitles (can get wordy)?
  + Should articles be organized into tags or categories?
  + Do we follow [Dublin Core](https://www.dublincore.org/specifications/dublin-core/dcmi-terms/) (a defined practice for documenting metadata) standards, or is there a better standard we want to use or create?

## **Readymag**

**Description:**

**Technical Complexity:** No technical skills required as designing was made to be in browser, but the plan starting at $384 a year allows for code injection

**Features:**

**Cost:** Free with limited options and paid versions ranging from $16/month to $64 a month

**Pros:**

* Beautiful interface
* very design focused
* allows unlimited draft projects
* Web hosting is built into each Readymag plan and is provided by Amazon Cloud,
* Mobile capabilities are supported

**Cons:**

* have to pay to get more features
* only paid version allows photo galleries
* google analytics, etc
* only 1 project can be published at a time with free version
* 10 pages per project (free version)
* 1 collaborator at a time, has readymag branding (free version)

**Resources:**

## **Crevado**

*Functions mostly as a portfolio site, but it is perfect for showcasing images and has the option of adding text.*

**Technical Complexity:** Uses HTML to work across desktops, laptops, tablets and smartphones, though it does not require any technical knowledge, but CSS can be edited in premium version

**Features:**

**Cost:** Free, with plus option at $6/month, premium at $9/month

**Pros:**

* Allows Google Analytics
* Secure HTTPS Hosting
* Mobile-optimized

**Cons:**

* Most of the design work would be on our end
* Most likely will have to design all logos to make the site look nice
* only premium offers the option to own your domain
* free only allows 30 images
* no audio for free
* no video for free or plus

**Resources:** <https://avibarzel.crevado.com/>

## **ucraft**

**Description:**

**Technical Complexity:** No coding necessary to build website, many templates ready to be used

**Features:**

**Cost:** Free - limited options, with Pro options starting at $10/month

**Pros:**

* Unlimited bandwidth
* free hosting – fast and secure websites hosted on Google Cloud
* allows for other integrations such as Google Analytics, Hotjar, Hello Bar, etc.,
* can connect custom domain in free version
* can design logos for you

**Cons:**

* free version doesn’t include designer and blogging tools
* limited to 15 pages for free version
* cannot add embed HTML/CSS/JS until paid options

**Resources:**

* <https://www.tesmodels.com/about>
* <https://hedgefoxstudio.ucraft.site/>

## **Wix.com**

**Description:**

**Technical Complexity:**

**Features:**

**Cost:** Pricing starts at $14/month

**Pros:**

* Unlimited pages and top-grade hosting for free
* premium options available
* Mobile optimized

**Cons:**

* Cannot own domain with free option

**Resources:**

* <https://www.heroinesinc.org/>
* <https://www.zelieforshe.com/thestory>

## **Weebly**

**Description:**

**Technical Complexity:** No coding necessary, website can be built through drag and drop, but custom HTML/CSS/JS can be implemented

**Features:**

**Cost:** Free - limited options, paid options starting at $6/month (billed annually)

**Pros:**

* Free version allows 3rd party embedded code
* themes created by top designers
* image editor
* video and audio can be added
* supports all types of website styles

**Cons:**

* Cannot connect to a custom domain for free
* free storage is not available until the second paid option ($12/month, billed annually)

**Resources:**

# **Possible Routes for Archive**

**CSV upload to Wordpress**

* Process detailed [here](https://tulane.box.com/s/eytwx8eoo87p1eel3etyfka6x92omk0a). A CSV sheet operates similarly to a standard excel spreadsheet. To prepare the data for upload, we would need to make an organized excel sheet with each column holding information (metadata) about each object (photo, newspaper article, etc.) which is displayed as a row. Example columns would be title, author, date, keywords, or what other metadata is helpful to display with that object. A wordpress plugin that would be installed on the site would allow the user to upload the CSV, specify a format for each row (i.e. each object) to be displayed with all of its accompanying metadata. The plugin will create a post for each row in the spreadsheet that displays each object with its accompanying data in the format specified by the user. The posts can then be organized and displayed in a number of ways through Wordpress.
* I worked on a [similar project](https://thisbeautifulsisterhood.wpcomstaging.com/) that used Wordpress for an archive (the site is still in progress, but it gives an idea of how it would look)

**Tulane Wordpress Exhibit**

* Tulane has resources for building [exhibits](https://exhibits.tulane.edu/)
* I don’t know if there is a way to not have it explicitly linked to Tulane and am not sure of the sustainability of this option
* Regardless, they have good exhibit building [resources](https://libguides.tulane.edu/online_exhibit/home)

**Wordpress Exhibit Plugin**

* [Culture Object](https://cultureobject.co.uk/) is made for importing museum objects
* [Tainacan](https://wordpress.org/plugins/tainacan/) helps create a digital repository

**Combining Wordpress and Omeka**

* As described [here](https://swhplibrary.net/archive/digital-archive-software/), Omeka could be used for the archive and Wordpress for text/informational pages. This would let us combine the strengths of each platform to create organized informational pages with a navigable archive. The downside is that whoever is running the sites in the future (the Council, a web manager, intern, students, etc.) would have to be proficient in both Wordpress and Omeka.

**Archive Inspiration**

*These websites were curated by LifexCode as possible sites to inspire our archives and exhibits*

* <https://www.honeypotperformance.org/>: This is a good example of using Wordpress for content and Omeka for archives. The [Chicago Black Social Culture map archive](https://cbscmap.omeka.net/) is created using Omeka and is linked to from the Wordpress website. This could be a viable plan for linking the existing MGIC website to an archive-focused space

# **Glossary**

*Explaining technical terms and concepts*

* **Frontend**: the public facing side of the website; the part of the website that the average viewer interacts with
* **Backend**: the behind-the-scenes side of the website seen by administrators; the place where administrators can create and edit content, media, and settings
* **Content Management System (CMS): the CMS used is the custom Wordpress site from the Peter Mayer firm. The CMS allows you to store, display, and manipulate like pages and media**
* **Metadata**: a set of data that describes other data. For example, the “other data” being described could be a photo and the metadata could be the photographer, the date is was taken, the title of the photo, etc
* **PHP**: PHP is a web-scripting language that works on things interacting with the server. It is more specialized and less common than CSS, so it is likely that a professional would be needed to make any edits that require changing the PHP.
* **CSS**: a web-based coding language that controls the style of a page. It is not necessary to be proficient in CSS to build a website, but there are many web resources that are helpful in making tweaks to the CSS to make minor layout changes.