Mariner Memories:
An Oral History Exhibit of Maine Maritime Academy Alumni (Proposal)

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PROJECT RATIONALE

Using digitized oral history interviews with alumni, this hypothetical exhibit is designed to tell the stories of MMA alumni in their own words, serving as

- An informational resource for prospective students and their families
- A retrospective resource for alumni and their families
- A networking and career planning resource for current students and alumni.

Many students consider MMA because they know about it through friends or relatives who attended, so the power of word-of-mouth and personal experience is already established as a potential admissions tool. The exhibit aims to capitalize on that phenomenon by providing greater access to curated alumni narratives that can present various themes, pique interest, inform about life at MMA, and foster a sense of personal connection.

Each item in the exhibit will be a *segment* of an oral history interview with an alumnus or alumna, selected from the full interviews and described for content. Each interviewee thus may have more than one entry, as multiple segments may be described from the same interview, and the same person may be interviewed at different times.

This particular exhibit is not for purposes of research or archiving, but rather to be used as in informational tool for former, current, and prospective students. Therefore the focus is on content and not on administrative detail or source and citation information.

SECTIONS OF THE EXHIBIT

Introductory Page
This page will feature a summary of the oral history project, a search box to search the whole collection, and link to browse all items in the collection.

Browse Page
This will be a listing the full collection of interview segments. Default order will be chronological ascending by graduation year (with alternative options for sorting). Each item will include a thumbnail image, Creator name (i.e., interviewee), graduation year, and title or ID number of the segment. A sidebar will allow user to limit collection by facets: e.g., **Creator**, **Subject**, **GraduationYear**, **Gender**, **CourseOfStudy**, **PlaceOfOrigin**, **Hometown** (if in Maine), **Regiment**, **Employer**. (Omeka plugin *Facet by Metadata.*)

Individual Item Page
Each item page will include a minimum of:

- An image of the interviewee (or placeholder image if none available)
- Descriptive fields about the creator and the segment - see metadata element sets below
- Embedded audio and/or video files of segment
- Link to searchable PDF transcript of segment (Omeka plugin *PDF Embed/PDF Text*)

A future goal would be to pull in additional digital images from a database of associated MMA archival materials, such as relevant course catalogs, yearbooks, commencement programs, campus photographs, etc., using Omeka plugin *Digital Object Linker*. Additional flair could be added by mapping interviewee places of origin using Omeka plugin *Geolocation*.

METADATA

The basic set of item descriptive fields can be negotiated in Dublin Core or with standard Omeka plugins, and will include:

ELEMENT NAME	ELEMENT FUNCTION
Identifier	Unique item ID number
Creator	Name of the interviewee, who is chiefly responsible for the intellectual content of segment. Includes birth dates (if known) and death dates (if applicable)
Title	Unique title assigned to segment based on content
Coverage	Time period/date range of content represented by the segment
Created	Date interview conducted (YYYY-MM-DD)
Extent	Duration of segment
Format	File format and file size of segment
Description	Text summary or abstract; additional keyword information not covered elsewhere, such as years attended, activities while at MMA, subsequent careers/positions, and vessels served on
Subject	Topical headings from locally-generated controlled vocabulary, with Library of Congress Subject Headings for ease of catalog integration
Simple Vocab Plugin	Plugin to aid in generation of controlled vocabulary
Catalog Search Plugin	Plugin that links subject field to MMA Library Catalog for additional information on that subject

Relation	Establishes connection between two items that reference or point to each other
References **isRefererencedBy**	
Item Relations Plugin	Allows administrator to define custom relationships specific to exhibit e.g., **is[FamilyRelation]Of**, **wasRoommateOf**, **workedWith**, **workedFor**….

Additional Omeka plugins not crucial to the exhibit as described, but valuable for simplifying or improving administrative processes include:

> *Exhibit Builder*
> *Item Order* (for creating different chronological or linear exhibits of oral history segments)
> *Search by Metadata* (for efficient search in a metadata heavy exhibit)
> *Bulk Metadata Editor* (for faster editing of the considerable number of metadata fields).

CUSTOM PLUGIN

Because the aim of this exhibit is to serve as an informational resource for a very specific set of users with specific needs, namely past, future, and current MMA students, it calls for custom data fields of more use to this audience, having to do with interviewees' experiences at MMA, their careers, and their connections and commonalities. The exhibit may be accessed by the public, but it will be designed to optimize use by the primary audience for exploring narratives based on criteria of interest to them.

DATA MODEL FOR PLUGIN

NEW *Creator Connections* **Plugin**
The new plugin, to be built in PHP, modifies and extends the **Creator*** field in Dublin Core by adding an element set that captures data needed to search on common themes with respect to a Creator's relationship with MMA and the maritime profession.

CUSTOM DATA ELEMENT NAME	CUSTOM ELEMENT FUNCTION
CourseOfStudy	Interviewee's major or course of study
GraduationYear	Year graduated; otherwise final year at MMA
PlaceOfOrigin	Location whence interviewee came to MMA - state or province; country if not USA or Canada
Hometown	Location in greater detail; designed primarily for Maine locations, but usable for all
Gender	Gender by which interviewee identifies
Regiment Y/N	Yes-or-no field indicating participation in the Regiment of Midshipmen (or not)
Employers	Names of employers for whom interviewee has worked

PLUGIN FUNCTIONALITY

The idea of the expanded element set is to provide data that will encourage users to search or browse the items based on criteria they may have in common with the interviewees and that may have a bearing on their experiences (**GraduationYear**, **Gender**), or based on criteria of relevance to their college (**CourseOfStudy**, **Regiment**) and career (**Employer**) goals. The location fields (**PlaceOfOrigin** and **Hometown**) are important to establish a sense of community; they assume a default of the United States and Canada, with the understanding that the bulk of MMA students come from Maine.

This added functionality allows the exhibit to make use of the power of networking as both a recruiting tool for MMA, and a career aid and personal support for students and alumni.

Alternatively, the plugin could be used to extend the Subject field instead, if the Creator is to be regarded as a Subject as well.

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