Digitization in the classroom: teaching undergraduates the art of digitizing history

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Digitization in the classroom:
Teaching undergraduates the art of digitizing history

Sophie Rondeau
Technical Services Librarian, Virginia Wesleyan College
HIST 250: Digital History  
(Fall 2015)

- General studies class with no requirements
- Designated “H” (history) classification
- Project and teaching collaboration between Research Librarian, Technical Services Librarian, and Associate Professor of History
Course learning outcomes

1. Students will learn to assess and evaluate digital tools

2. Students will ask historical questions about the tools’ utility to historical methodological approaches

3. Students will produce scholarly materials for the digital world.
Topics

• Toolboxes (Google, TimelineJS, Crowdsourcing, Social Media and WordPress)

• Digital history project examples

• Copyright and ethics

• Archival management

• Examining images

• Controlled vocabularies
VWC Yearbooks Digitization Project

Students were required to:

• Outline a project plan with their group.

• Digitize select images from select yearbooks.

• Attribute Dublin Core metadata to items in Omeka.

• Attribute controlled vocabularies to items in Omeka.

• Create an Omeka exhibit.

• Present their exhibits for feedback.
How the librarians contributed

• Instruction (digital literacy, metadata, controlled vocabularies to prepare students for digitization project)

• Readings (provided at the end of the slideshow)

• LibGuides

• Content Standards Google Site

• Presentation feedback

• Final project feedback
What's going on in this picture?
What makes you say that?
What more can you find?
SIMPLY EXPLAINED:
METADATA

WHAT'S "METADATA"?

A WORD WITH 8 LETTERS

Metadata & Controlled Vocabularies
Metadata is everywhere around us
Introduction to the concept of **metadata schema**

- Definitions of metadata schema were provided.

- Fields and values were explained.

- Sample metadata schema was provided.

- Example for engagement (Game of Thrones book vs. poster).
Controlled vocabularies

• Explored definitions.

• Discussed their purpose:
  • Disambiguation
    • Adding qualifiers to homonyms
    • Synonymous terms
  • Collocation

• Introduced several established controlled vocabularies.

• Thesaurus for Graphic Materials
This site provides content guidelines for the Digital History 250 yearbook digitization project. The purpose of the guide is to provide direction for metadata creators on data input associated with the project. It is intended for use by Virginia Wesleyan College students currently enrolled in the Digital History 250 class offered during Fall 2015. This guide will define each metadata element that will be used for the project, as well as controlled vocabularies, capitalization, dates, physical description, formats, types, and so on.
For students - Instructions to scan yearbook images Fall 2015

- Omeka/Bond WCV Yearbooks website
- VWC Yearbook Digitization Project Metadata Content Guidelines
  This site provides content guidelines for the Digital History 250 yearbook digitization project. (VWC users login for access.)
- Konica Instructions
- HP Solution Instructions (LIB INTRU 002 computer)
- HP instructions (LIB INTRU 001 & 003) (Hist250)
The outcome : what worked

• All students accomplished tasks.

• Most students functioned effectively in teams to accomplish task.

• Most students functioned effectively in Omeka.
The outcome : what didn’t work so well

- Students did not produce scholarly materials for the digital world.

- Content was limited.

- Most students struggled to create consistent metadata.

- Historical narratives were full of bias.

- Division between teams.

- Omeka was not exploited to its potential.
Digital History at VWC: the future

- Rename the class, “Digitizing History”
- Oral history project
- More flexibility with content
- Omeka will be better exploited
- ENG 105 requirement
- Co-taught by librarian(s) and faculty
Questions?

Special thanks to Patty Clark and Richard Bond for their shared thoughts and contribution to this presentation.
Assigned readings

