#DLFteach • #DLFTeach Toolkit: Lesson Plans for Digital Library Instruction

Digital Exhibitions for Undergraduate Introductory-Level Art History Students

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Session Specifics

This 50-minute class is offered during a session of a 200-level undergraduate art history course. The course's final project requires students to form small groups to curate art exhibitions and present them virtually using the Omeka S digital exhibition software. This session introduces students to digital exhibitions, visual literacy, and project management concepts so that they can successfully complete their final project. This session may be offered by more than one library instructor in partnership with the course instructor.

Instructional Partners

Library instructor(s) and Art History professor. (Note: Library instructor should have technical knowledge of installing and maintaining an Omeka site.)

Audience

Undergraduates, with some Art History majors

Curricular Context

This course is one of many era-specific Art History courses offered each semester. Art History majors must take at least 8 of these courses.

Learning Outcomes

1. Students will learn how to create and curate digital exhibitions using Omeka S (e.g., create items, collections, and exhibits and perform basic customizations to their groups' websites).
2. Students will understand how copyright and fair use relate to the curatorial decisions for their exhibition.
3. Students will exhibit an awareness of how design choices impact the user experience of a physical or digital exhibition.

Preparation

Prior to the session, library instructors set up the [Omeka S](#) instance on IU's server for faculty projects and created a blank exhibition site for each small group, adding students from the class roster provided by the Art History professor to the appropriate sites. The library instructors developed this lesson plan in consultation with the professor. Assessment of student learning outcomes in creating digital exhibitions was developed collaboratively by the library instructors and the professor.

Materials

Laptops and screen projection. Additionally, the Omeka S software requires installation and setup on a server with the following requirements:

- Linux operating system
- Apache HTTP server (with mod_rewrite enabled)
- MySQL version 5.0 or greater
- PHP scripting language version 5.3.2 or greater (with mysqli and exif extensions installed)
- ImageMagick image manipulation software (for resizing images)

Session Outline

Class Assignment

The course's final project requires students to form small groups to curate art exhibitions and present them virtually using the Omeka S digital exhibition software. All of the components of the final project are required to be made available in each group's exhibition site:

- 8 works of art
- A 5-7 sentence-long exhibition statement
- The selection of one work that will serve as the publicity image for the exhibition, and 1 paragraph explaining why it encapsulates the exhibition's main questions/inquiries
- 1-2 paragraph statement explaining each group's curatorial decision-making process
- An exhibition floor plan (drawn by hand, then scanned and uploaded into the exhibition site)

Introduction to Digital Exhibitions

10 minutes

1. Provide an overview of digital exhibitions with some examples:
 - [IU Lilly Library War of 1812](#)
 - [IU Lilly Library Orson Welles](#)
2. Briefly discuss some similarities and differences between physical and digital exhibitions
3. Share a model digital exhibition on the [course's Omeka S portal](#)
4. Ask students to log in to the course's Omeka S portal via links provided in emails from the platform.
At this point, students will see two digital exhibition sites in the portal: the model exhibition we shared and a more bare-bones demo site with minimal content, to be added to and enhanced throughout the session.

Choosing and adding items to your digital exhibition

5 minutes

1. Provide a basic overview of copyright and fair use with some examples of sources of CC-licensed images:
 - Demo a [CC Image Search](#)
 - Demo a [Wikimedia Commons search](#)
 - Demo the [Rijksmuseum website](#) which has freely-available images in the public domain
2. Demo: Show how to add an item to the Omeka S bare-bones demo site
3. Demo: Describe the item with relevant descriptive metadata taken from the source description or caption. Omeka S requires you to select your type of metadata (text, URI, or other Omeka item), but for this class we will just be adding text description. If any students/groups are interested in enhancing their descriptive metadata later in the project, the library instructors provide more individualized assistance to them.
4. Demo: Create an item set for previously-added items and for future items to inhabit

Practice selecting and uploading an image as an Omeka item

5 minutes

1. Free time for all students, now logged in to the class Omeka S portal, to select, add, and describe at least one image
 - Students also should associate their items with the item set the instructor(s) created in step 2.
 - As students add items, the instructor(s) will refresh the item set web page to show the growing list on a projected version of the site at the front of the class. This technique engages students because it allows them to see their contributions in real time.

Reflection on initial curation

10 minutes

Ask students open-ended questions about the item selection, uploading, and description process:

- How did you choose what to add?
- Where did you find it?
- Was it your first choice?
- How did you decide to describe it?

Create Omeka S pages to showcase content

5 minutes

1. Briefly show an example bare-bones Omeka S site page and then the back-end view of it; then create another one and begin adding text and items into content blocks
2. Show the various available display options for content blocks and how to configure and reorder them

Practice creating a page

5 minutes

1. All students will each create a page and add a block of content with at least 1 item to the bare-bones demo site
2. As students add pages, the instructor(s) will refresh the site to show the growing list of pages

Customizing digital exhibitions

5 minutes

1. Demo of how to change a site's Omeka theme, changing its appearance
2. Demo of how to add pages to the navigation menu of an Omeka site

Wrap-up

5 minutes

Answer final questions about the assignment or platform. Offer follow-up consultations once group sites are created.

Post-class activity

1. Students will work in small groups to develop their own digital exhibition topic and develop their sites
2. Instructor(s) will create additional sites within Omeka S and add students to them with the appropriate permissions
3. Instructors(s) will visit class in 2 weeks to offer 30-minute consultations for technical, formatting, and content selection/curation issues

Assessment

After the final projects are finished and presented, students fill out a final assessment and reflection (see Additional Instructional Materials below); see questions in Part I about digital exhibition development and the Omeka software.

Additional Instructional Materials

Assessment template

[Final assessment and reflection](#)