OMEKA: Exhibit Builder

by Anthony Bushong and David Kim

What is Omeka?

Omeka is a web publishing platform and a content management system (CMS), developed by the Center for History and New Media (CHNM) at George Mason University. Omeka was developed specifically for scholarly content, with particular emphasis on digital collections and exhibits. While Omeka may not be as readily customizable as other platforms designed for general use, such as WordPress, Omeka has been used by many academic and cultural institutions for its built-in features for cataloging and presenting digital collections. Developing content in Omeka is complemented by an extensive list of descriptive metadata fields that conforms to Dublin Core, a standard used by libraries, museums and archives (for more on metadata and creating a data repository, click through to the creating a repository section). This additional layer helps to establish proper source attribution, standards for description and organization of digital resources–all important aspects of scholarly work in classroom settings but often overlooked in general blogging platforms.

Omeka.net or Omeka.org?

Omeka.net is a lite-version that does not require its own server. The Omeka full-version is downloaded via Omeka.org and installed in your server. The lite-version has a limited number of plug-ins and is not customizable to the extent of the full-version.

(For Instructors: If the students are using Omeka to build small collections and exhibits (less than 600 MB total), Omeka.net version can suffice. However, plug-ins for maps and timelines are currently only available for the installed version. See here for more information on Omeka.net options and pricing, and here for a comprehensive comparison.)

For this course, we will be using the installed version (2.0) of Omeka. Your Omeka site will be the main hub for your project. Collections, exhibits, maps and timelines will be all generated using the Omeka features. Data visualizations, network analysis and other parts of the project will be developed using other applications, but they all should be embedded in, or linked from, your Omeka site. Basic html is all that is required to make minor design changes for the site, but those more advanced in programming and web design may be granted access to the php file in the server. The following plug-ins are already installed for your project: Exhibit Builder, Neatline, CSV Import, and Simple Pages. See the list of the plug-ins currently available for Omeka 2.0. You may request installation of more plug-ins for your project.
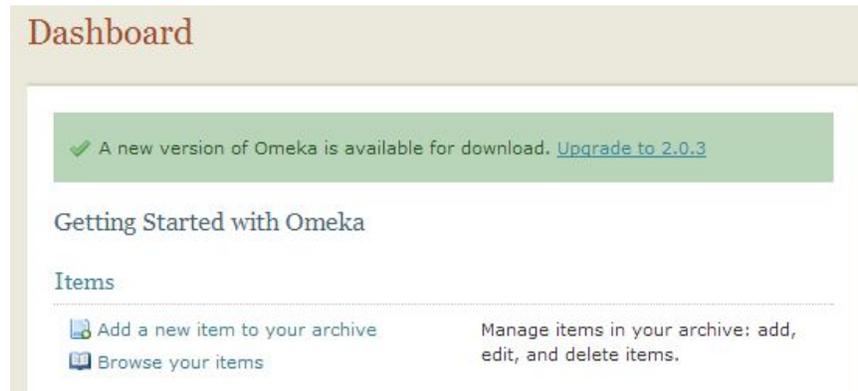
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Building a Repository in Omeka

1) Add Items

You can add almost all popular file formats in Omeka for images, video, sound and documents. When adding an item, you will start with at your *Dashboard*.

a. Select *Add a New Item to Your Archive* under the 'Items' heading.

2) Descriptive Metadata

When you add items in Omeka, you are required to use Dublin Core Metadata Element Set. Click here to learn about the vocabulary used in Dublin Core.

a. Use this *taxonomy* to describe the item that you are adding.
b. Make sure you group decides on standards to describe various aspects of the items: (date: by year, century, span?), (subject: Library of Congress Subject Heading?) (location: City and State, Country, region?) You don't have the use all Dublin Core fields included with Omeka, but the selection of the fields you choose to describe should be consistent for all items.

c. Next, select *Item Type Metadata.* In this section, you can select amongst 12 different item categories under *Item Type*. These metadata fields are specific to each of their respective types.

3) Tags

You can use tags to help make your items easily searchable based on the classification that your group have decided are relevant not only to the item but to the general scheme of your overall project. Tags are also often referred to as *folksonomies*.

4) Assign the item to a 'collection'

The collection types should be based off of how you desire to organize your items. If you want to add a new collection, go to *Collections -> Add a New Collection* in the top right hand corner. These collections should reflect the different types of items and should be useful for referencing items in your exhibits.

5) Creating Exhibits

Exhibits make use of the items in the collection to create visual narratives. The Exhibit Builder plug-in offers several template options for the individual sections and pages within your exhibit. First, understand the hierarchy of the exhibits: Exhibits — Sections — Pages. Then, take a moment to sketch out the organization of the exhibit prior to creating them in Omeka.
Watch this video for step-by-step process.

6) Non-Exhibit Content

a. Omeka offers the Simple Pages plug-in to create pages within your Omeka site that are not associated with any specific exhibits, such as the home page and the "about" page.
b. Omeka provides many instructions for various activities.

* See its documentation page for a list of solutions for common problems and suggestions for embedding Google maps, YouTube videos, etc.