



Vancouver, BC
October 26–28

**DLF Liberal Arts Colleges Preconference:
Collaborating Liberally, Creating Critically: Experimenting With Undergraduate
Digital Project Assignments || Beyond A Cabinet of Digital Curiosities: Collection
as Praxis**

Sunday, October 25, 2015, 2:15-3:15pm

Session Leaders (include Twitter handles)

Ben Murphy

Brendan O'Connell, [@brendan0connell](#) (note: that's a zero in the middle!)

Melissa Salrin

Slides: [Melissa and Ben's slides](#)

Though it was not presented verbatim, [the text of Melissa and Ben's presentation is here.](#)

Notes

Beyond a Cabinet of Digital Curiosities

Whitman College

Ben Murphy & Melissa Salrin

View the practice of collecting as a logical extension of Information Literacy

Framework Frame Teaching about collecting: fits well within "Information Creation as a Process"

Teaching about the building of collections using OMeeka is a powerful way to do this and undergird the teaching of how information and collections come to be

Two courses were the focus

Why omeka?

- open source

- had some faculty interested in developing student "public writing skills"

- student focus on digital media tends to be "consumptive rather than productive" to offer a product other than a research paper

- Helped students to understand provenance and metadata and begin to recognize the constructed nature of knowledge

Teaching a "habit of encountering digital information from a position of skepticism"

The Racial Archive Project --

The students chose which Dublin Core metadata to use

Was able to teach IL and intellectual property issues

Tension between teaching higher order concepts and the faculty requirements for a course

Want to make explicit to students that all archival objects are consciously created

For this class -- the IL goals fit with the faculty desires for using Omeka

In subsequent classes, they invited new students to design interventions for some project

already created

Advanced Composition Class

They worked closely with the faculty member through a small institutional grant

Use physical archival collections on campus to help students engage their critical thinking and writing skills

Faculty member was interested in helping students understand how to use primary sources, particularly in a public argument/exhibit

Librarians needed to find objects that fit into the larger themes of the class and they got

a

student to digitize the materials. Thus allowed students to focus on *using* the stuff instead of worrying about locating the sources and messing with the tools, etc.

Vision for course shifted when it enrolled three students ...

Gave students a lot of freedom as a result

Students uploaded some of their own content and asked archives staff to do some digitization of objects for them

WE had the idea of in the future possibly giving examples of bad metadata/digitization/projects that students can potentially help them fix

Due to low enrollment and changes in the curriculum, it may not be taught again

Ways that the faculty/librarian frame the use of technology has a huge effect on whether students just see the technical issues as a thing to be "fulfilled" or an integral part of their learning

Work in teaching about collecting -- teaching IL, teaching about the conscious choices of collecting

Smith College

Collaborating Liberally

Brendan O'Connell

Jean Bauer Associate Director of the Digital Humanities Center wrote blog post on gingerbread and digital humanities -- (<http://packets.jeanbauer.com/>)

Baking gingerbread and thinking about the systems of gingerbread makes it a DH project, if you eat it? is this DH? "UX=yum"

“What is critical about critical design?” -- Jeffrey Bardzell and Shaowen Bardzell *What is ‘Critical’ about Critical Design?*

“critical theorists gonna critique OR take action through transgression...is there another way?”

Lev Manovich, comp sci prof “19th century culture was defined by the novel, 20th century culture by cinema, the culture of the 21st century will be defined by the interface”

Any sort of interface communicates messages about power and reality

This is an interesting creative space for undergraduate students

We need to talk to them about the constructed nature of interfaces and that this is a creative space and it has potential to be empowering

Smith -- “Women for the world” the campaign slogan

ARH292: Collecting the Past, Course that the library collaborated with

collaborated to design a digital project for the students

they were to develop a guide to a pre-hispanic of colonial archaeological site in the americas and a full argument in the digital form

How --

instruction session

led a discussion on what do “tours” mean and what is the authorial voice/thesis?

Talked about interfaces and the ideology/constructed nature of interfaces

Used twine (<http://twinery.org/>)

Could create a linear story, choose your own adventure, explore, etc interactive adventure, different ways to move individuals through a tour

Connected students with different support structures on campus

(spatial analysis, center of media production, education technology services, imaging center, etc)

About two projects

One brought interfaces to the classmates to get them to provide input (Alaska Natives and the Silver Hand)

Game format, critical mobile tour (The Reinvention of Maya Culture: An Interactive Rout for Chinese Tourists) -- a companion tour for a tour that is known to have inadequacies

Smith has a campus-wide “Design Thinking and the Liberal Arts Framework”

reimagining lib arts for synergizing humanities, social sciences, and STEM for creative engagement and active creation

Example --

students are inviting students to help design the library “design your dream carrel” from engineering students

Students invite students to design the “library of the future” out of milk crates and comment

Q&A

Interested in “chinese take on the Maya” project from Brendan O’Connell’s presentation.

Did the students as part of the project have to reflect on why they made specific design decisions?

Yes, they used the mode of the "critique". Had students treat the digital objects as works of art and they had to talk about their process to their peers.

Were you using your own instance of Omeka or a hosted one? Were there any limitations in the design with Omeka?

Whitman

Yes, we are hosting it ourselves, the omeka.org version. We had a good relationship with a colleague in IT to make this happen and be on the server.

Were the technical hurdles a big part of it?

Brendan: As an IT person, picked tools that were going to be easy for students Did get into a space of a technology arms race -- a bunch of comp sci students made something outsized and other students felt it was somewhat unfair, but otherwise not as much an issue

Whitman: More of an issue than expected, this got faculty to help them understand that they needed more than just a 15 minute "this is how it works." It has to be very intentional and you are asking students to also have the same intentionality

Is the point the process or the final product? How do you balance the creation of the final product and the sharing of the final work?

Brendan: Projects are unpublished, but explicitly got permission to share specific information. This was a matter of creating trust. For next year, we are going to do a public project because we have a better sense of trust. A student had even asked to make the site public to which we said -- of course. Thought it would be easier to keep it from public, but we were actually making it harder.

Whitman: We talked about copyright and the issues with IP. But we did talk about the benefits of making it public. For most of them, they did want to go and take their own pictures. Still trying to figure out the best way forward. A lot of students just found their images on google image search, so they couldn't share it.

How are these projects being assessed and graded? I know we have faculty concerned because they don't have a rubric for this?

Brendan: We collaborated on a rubric w/ faculty

Whitman: Not a whole lot of thought about assessment on this. These ultimately weren't our ideas, so we left this ultimately to the faculty members. We talked to them a little bit,

but left it to them.

Looking into the future...what other tools are you excited about and want to experiment with?

Brendan: This semester, I've gotten simpler with tools. Animated gifs around the maps that students will be working with. Getting students to look at buzzfeed, for example, to see how things like this are getting communicated. Trying to figure out how to use the simplest tools possible to have the greatest impact.

Whitman: To me, it's about getting the content out there, then perhaps to look for tools. But I want to find and get out there all the great projects I know are out there.