

Comparing Systems for Creating Digital Exhibits

Looking for a platform for your digital exhibit? Compare some of the leading content management systems.

**Note that some of these are not explicitly digital exhibit software, but can be manipulated to support exhibits. This is not a comprehensive list of systems or system functionalities.*

	Omeka omeka.org/ www.omeka.net/	WordPress wordpress.org/ wordpress.com/	Scalar scalar.me/anvc/scalar/	Curatescape curatescape.org	Story Maps storymaps.arcgis.com/en/
Creator	Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, George Mason Univ	WordPress + WordPress Developer Community	Alliance for Networking Visual Culture (ANVC)	Center for Public History + Digital Humanities, Cleveland State Univ	Esri
Description	“Omeka is a web publishing platform for sharing digital collections and creating media-rich online exhibits.” http://www.omeka.net/	“WordPress is open source software you can use to create a beautiful website, blog, or app.” wordpress.org/ See https://wordpress.org/about/ for more.	“Scalar is a free, open source authoring and publishing platform that’s designed to make it easy for authors to write long-form, born-digital scholarship online. Scalar enables users to assemble media from multiple sources and juxtapose them with their own writing in a variety of	“Curatescape is a web and mobile app framework for publishing location-based content using the Omeka content management system.” https://curatescape.org/about/	“Esri Story Maps are web applications that let authors combine beautiful maps with narrative text, striking images, and multimedia, including video.” https://storymaps.arcgis.com/en/faq/#question1

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			ways, with minimal technical expertise required.” https://scalar.me/anvc/scalar/		
	Omeka	WordPress	Scalar	Curatescape	Story Maps
Cost & hosting options	- Omeka.net: Free version 1 site per account (hosted at omeka.net) - Omeka.net: additional fee-based plans (Omeka hosts) - Omeka Classic: free download of Omeka to install in your own hosting environment (requires access to web hosting service, either through your institution or through third-party hosting subscription plan) - OmekaS: multisite version; free to download and install on your own server (additional costs may be associated depending on access to server environments)	- Free (limited) hosting via wordpress.com (additional plans available if you don't have access to a server) - Full version of WP available at wordpress.org to install on one's own server - Many third-party hosting services offer one-click WP install - Multisite version of WP can be installed in your hosting environment (or may already be supported on your campus) - Check with your institution to see if WP is supported on your campus (and if so, what limitations	Scalar hosts (free) or you can install on own server (additional expenses may be required for purchase of server space, depending on institutional agreements)	Free and full-service packages available: https://curatescape.org/about/pricing/	- Esri hosts; no local install available? - ArcGIS subscription required - Educational and institutional accounts available - Free non-commercial ArcGIS public accounts also available; Facebook or Google credentials sign-in supported.

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		are imposed on installing themes and plugins)			
	Omeka	WordPress	Scalar	Curatescape	Story Maps
Primary functionalities	- Developed to support digital collections and exhibits - Create items (digital objects with associated metadata) - Create collections of items - Create exhibits that pull items from across various collections - OmekaS can be connected to your local Fedora and DSpace repositories	- Can be used to create robust websites and blogs - Highly customizable and extensible via vast number of plugins and widgets that can be installed - There are a wide range of themes, many of which are oriented around images rather than text	- Web authoring system - Media rich support and supports media annotation - Supports collaborative authoring and book-length projects - Designed for non-linear narrative - Supports multiple visualizations	- Content geo-located on a map - Tours - Search and browse - Layered multimedia - Social media - Analytics for web and mobile	Functionality based on Story Map templates, some of which include: - Tour: sequence of place enabled photos or videos - Journal: in-depth narrative organized into sections presented in a scrolling side panel - Cascade: immersive, full-screen scrolling; blends narrative text, maps, 3D scenes, images, videos, etc - Crowdsource: publish and manage a crowdsourced story to which anyone can contribute photos with captions - Shortlist: present places of interest

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					- Templates for presenting multiple maps, or comparing maps side by side
	Omeka	WordPress	Scalar	Curatescape	Story Maps
Information architecture	Object-oriented: build items that can be added to collections and exhibits	Organized around posts (dynamic content) and pages (static). Native media library can store images (depending on storage limitations of your implementation).	Flexible structure based on - paths (linear sequences) - tags (non-linear content groupings) - “any piece of Scalar content become a path or tag (or both), but it can also reference any other piece of content: text, video, audio, imagery”	Narrative-driven rather than organized around the display of individual archival objects https://curatescape.org/about/ and https://curatescape.org/docs/content-creation-guide/	Components: - Builder: interface for creating story via templates - Viewer: presents the story to the audience
Strengths	- Well-suited for digital collections and exhibits - Easy to add items and associated metadata - Easy to use exhibit-builder templates - Tagging feature	- Widely used and supported - Lots of themes and plugins available - Ideal for creating a text- or image- heavy website - Supports HTML embedded content - Relatively easy to	- Highly flexible - Supports multiple media formats - Easily import media from YouTube, vimeo and many scholarly archival collections - Several customizable themes	- Optimized for mobile usage - Ideal for self-guided tours or virtual tours - Organized around thematic stories and tours	- Can be used for digital storytelling without explicit spatial or map-based components - Configurable templates that are easy to use - Does not require extensive GIS

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	allows you to enhance your metadata	customize (can alter the underlying code if installed on your own server)			knowledge to use
	Omeka	WordPress	Scalar	Curatescape	Story Maps
Limitations	- Free trial version limits you to one site per account, with limited storage and limited customizability - Full version can be difficult to customize; may require additional developer support depending on what you're trying to do - Plugins not always well maintained, especially during a major system update - Not all plugins and themes available in free version	- Not explicitly designed for displaying, browsing, or exhibiting digital objects and associated metadata, though you can mimic that in a page or post (CultureObject might be a useful plugin; there are some exhibition templates that can be adapted, too) - Storage limits in free version - Limited themes and plugins in free version - Can't alter code in free wordpress.com version	- Can be difficult to learn and hard to customize	- Can't be used on the free omeka.net; requires your own server or Curatescape's hosting services - Customization is limited to colors and logo in free version - Customizing in the paid version may require hiring additional developer or designer	- Uncertain to what extent templates are customizable (and if so, how easy it is to customize) - Viewer is not fully accessible (but they're working on it) - Media objects should be web accessible (some subscriptions allow for Esri cloud hosting)
Metadata standard	Dublin Core	None	RDF (Resource	Modified Dublin	? presumably GIS

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used			Description Framework) and HTML5. Interoperable with web standards such as Dublin Core.	Core https://github.com/CPHDH/Curatescape/wiki/Content-Layout-Guide	data standards
	Omeka	WordPress	Scalar	Curatescape	Story Maps
Supports bulk import/export	Y - plus CSV import plugin and CSV export plugin (not available in free version)	Y - additional plugins (such as CSV importer) can be installed	To some extent, and only with Scalar partners . Export capabilities unknown	Can bulk import though it is not recommended; bulk export capabilities unknown	? but probably not
Supports media types:			https://scalar.me/anvc/features/media-support/	https://github.com/CPHDH/Curatescape/wiki/Formatting-requirements	Media content must be web-accessible
--images	Y	Y - either in Media Library or link to web hosted image	Y - ingest locally or import from web (in many cases)	Y - jpg or png < 200 KB	Y
--video	Y	Y - typically embed from YouTube or Vimeo	Y - easy to import from YouTube and Vimeo	Y - 20Mb maximum; 1mbps+ bitrate	Y
--audio	Y	Y - but may not be available in all wordpress.com accounts ; supports embed from SoundCloud or	Y	Y - mp3 1-2 MB	? presumably can embed from soundcloud or similar

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		similar			
--3D	?	?	?	?	Y
--other	?	?	KML maps	?	?
	Omeka	WordPress	Scalar	Curatescape	Story Maps
Supports visualizations:		Partial list of vis plugins	https://scalar.me/anvc/features/built-in-visualizations/		
--mapping	Y via Neatline plugin or embedding external web accessible map	Y - can embed maps via HTML code and/or install map-based plugin	Y	Y	Y
--timelines	It is possible to embed a web accessible timeline onto an exhibit page (there may be restrictions in the free version)	Y - WP timeline plugin(s) available; can embed external timelines via HTML embed code	? Probably can embed web accessible via HTML code	? - possibly via html embed code	? - some templates allow html embed code https://storymaps.arcgis.com/en/faq/#question24
--network vis	It is possible to embed a web accessible network visualization onto an exhibit page	Can embed web accessible visualizations or install an appropriate plugin	Y	? - possibly via html embed code	Same as above
--other	?	probably	Y	? - possibly via html embed code	Same as above

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Supports user-generated content	Not on the free site?	Y via comments; additional plugins can expand capabilities	Y - supports comments and annotations	Yes - via standard Omeka functionality	Y - depends on template / type of Story Map
Mobile optimized	OmekaS has mobile-ready themes	Y - has mobile responsive themes	?	Yes - designed for mobile usage	Y - mobile responsive
	Omeka	WordPress	Scalar	Curatescape	Story Maps
Examples/ Galleries	http://info.omeka.net/showcase/ and http://omeka.org/classic/showcase/	https://wordpress.org/showcase/ (not exclusive to digital exhibit sites)	https://scalar.me/anvc/scalar/showcase/	https://curatescape.org/projects/	https://storymaps.arcgis.com/en/gallery/#s=0 see also galleries for each template: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/en/app-list/

Additional Resources & Tools

- 5 Free and Open Source Tools for Creating Digital Exhibitions: <http://oedb.org/ilibrarian/5-free-and-open-source-tools-for-creating-digital-exhibitions/>
- Collection and Exhibition Platforms, Created by Randy Stern, last modified by Wendy M. Gogel on Mar 31, 2015 <https://wiki.harvard.edu/confluence/display/HLSLibraryInteroperability/Collection+and+Exhibition+Platforms>
- Knightlab at Northwestern University has created some very easy-to-use visualization tools that can be adopted for small-scale exhibits or embedded in other websites (they're also great for the classroom!): <https://knightlab.northwestern.edu/>. I especially like: [TimelineJS](#), [StoryMapJS](#), and [JuxtaposeJS](#).
- Interested in creating data visualization to embed in your exhibit (system permitting)? Check out this handy list of data visualization tools: <http://dataviz.tools/>.
- The [Mukurtu](#) Content Management System (Drupal-based) is a free, mobile, and open source platform built with indigenous communities to manage and share digital cultural heritage.

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- Many institutions are adapting the [Drupal](#) content management system for digital exhibits and institutional webpages. Drupal is more powerful than WordPress, but harder to use out of the box.



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