Omeka: An Introduction

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Learning Goals

By the end of this tutorial, participants will:

1. Understand the building blocks of Omeka as a content management system and data curation platform
2. Know how to navigate Omeka sites (private and public views)
3. Understand the basics of Dublin Core metadata schema
4. Be able to add items (individually), enable plugins, create collections, and build exhibits
5. Be able to manipulate the appearance of Omeka sites
6. Be able to create custom pages in Omeka

Omeka

- Omeka = “Wordpress for museums”:
  - Allows users to build digital archives of books, images, recordings, performances, and many other kinds of items
  - Free
  - Open-source
  - Wide community uptake

Items & Collections

Users can curate collections of digital items

Images

Audio

Videos

Performances

abēcēdē

→ abecedaria

Noun, f.; 1x m. or n.

Att. sp.: F.: abecede.

M. or N.: abecedes.

3 occ. (mainly in ByrM)

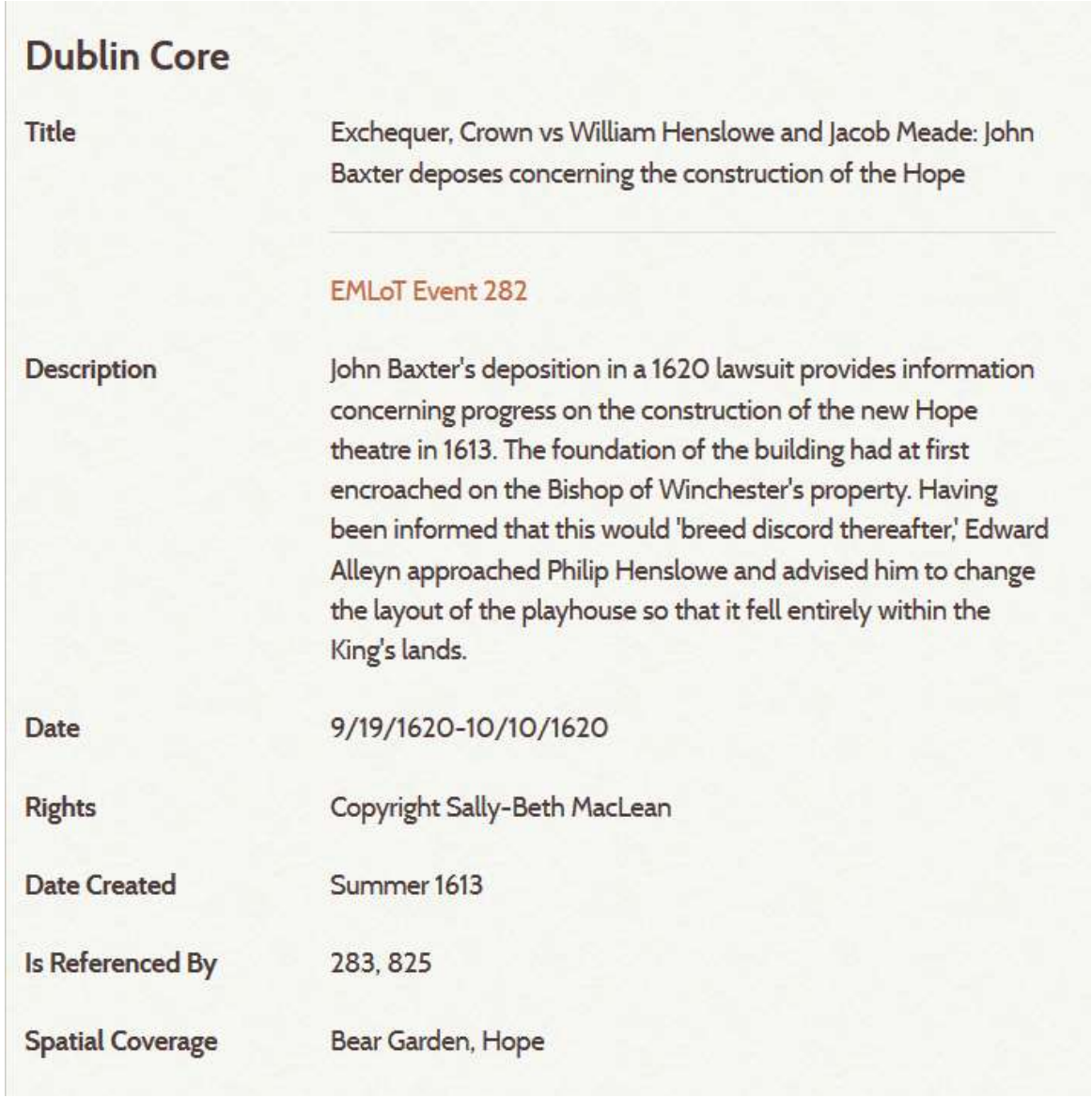
a. an ABC, th … *se abecedes*

'in alphabet

Lesson Plans

Metadata

- Users can create rigorous metadata (Dublin Core standard) for each item
- Discoverability & interoperability with aggregators and library catalogues

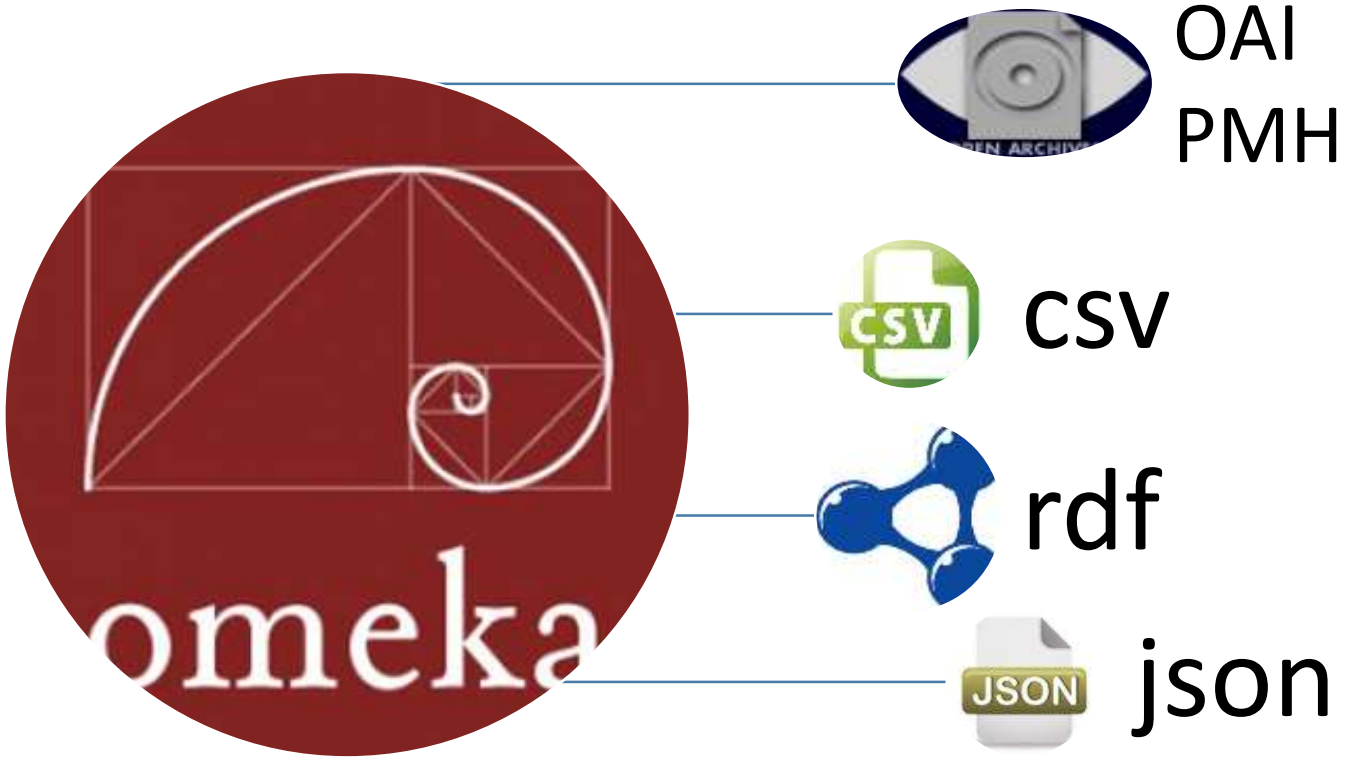


Dublin Core

Title	Exchequer, Crown vs William Henslowe and Jacob Meade: John Baxter deposes concerning the construction of the Hope
	EMLoT Event 282
Description	John Baxter's deposition in a 1620 lawsuit provides information concerning progress on the construction of the new Hope theatre in 1613. The foundation of the building had at first encroached on the Bishop of Winchester's property. Having been informed that this would 'breed discord thereafter,' Edward Alleyn approached Philip Henslowe and advised him to change the layout of the playhouse so that it fell entirely within the King's lands.
Date	9/19/1620-10/10/1620
Rights	Copyright Sally-Beth MacLean
Date Created	Summer 1613
Is Referenced By	283, 825
Spatial Coverage	Bear Garden, Hope

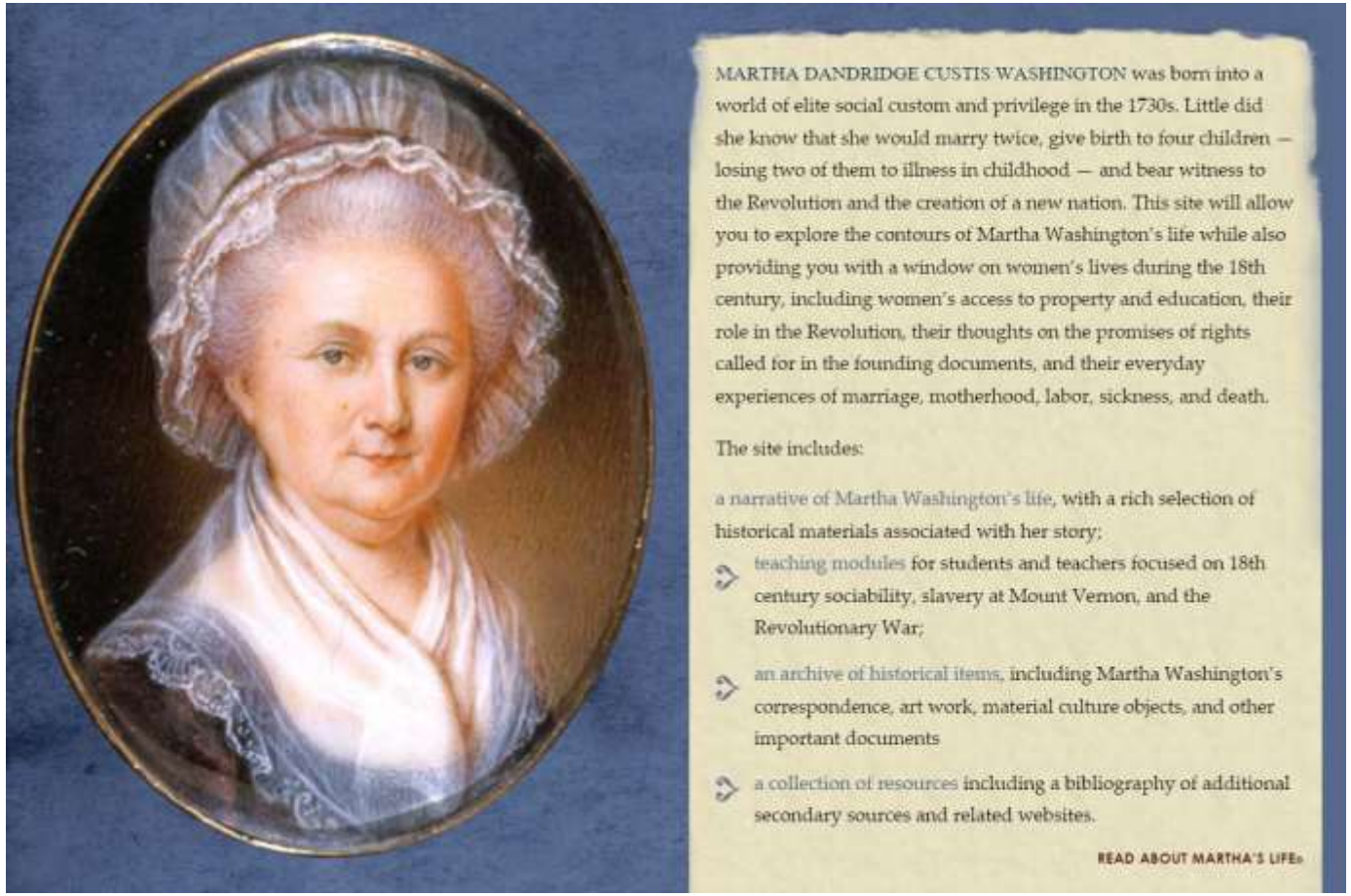
Preservation

- Via API, can programmatically import/export collection in a variety of standard formats (csv, rdf, json)
- Via OAI-PMH, can expose metadata for harvesting



Storytelling

- Through its Exhibit plugin, Omeka lets users tell stories with their collections.
- Users can arrange items from their collections into multimedia essays, using the “Lego bricks” of the archive to tell stories and make arguments.



Examples of Omeka Sites

Gothic Past: Visual Archive of Gothic Architecture and Sculpture in Ireland

Gothic Past uses material from the archival collections of the Irish Art Research Centre at Trinity College Dublin.

Project developed by the History of Art Department and the Library of Trinity College Dublin and the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media at George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia.

Gothic Past: Visual Archive of Gothic Architecture and Sculpture in Ireland

An exhibit in *Gothic Past: images of mouldings (*individual collection items) are displayed within a narrative (the exhibit).

Europeana Art Nouveau Exhibition, Europeana

URL: http://exhibitions.europeana.eu/exhibits/show/art-nouveau-en

Plugins: Exhibit Builder, Simple Pages

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Europeana Art Nouveau Exhibition, Europeana

The “Themes” are Omeka exhibits: narrative pathways through the items in the digital collection.

Europeana Art Nouveau Exhibition, Europeana

This is a snippet from an exhibit narrative. Each exhibit is made up of items (right), whose image appears in the exhibit, and whose metadata and detailed information can be accessed via the exhibit.

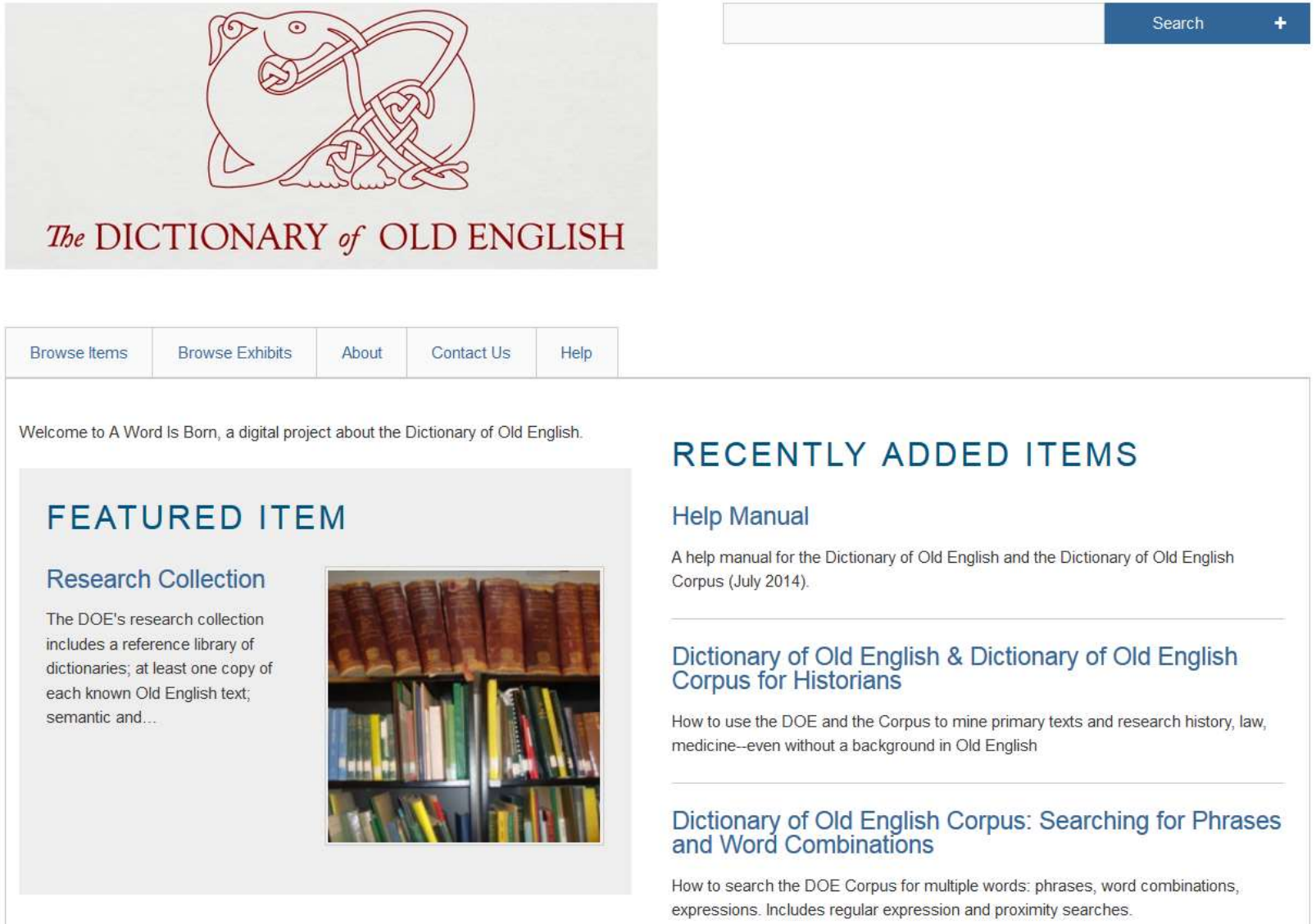
Europeana Art Nouveau Exhibition, Europeana

Individual item: Hokusai, *Iris et sauterelle.*

Individual item metadata includes title, creator, description, source, rights, etc: the elements of the Dublin Core metadata schema.

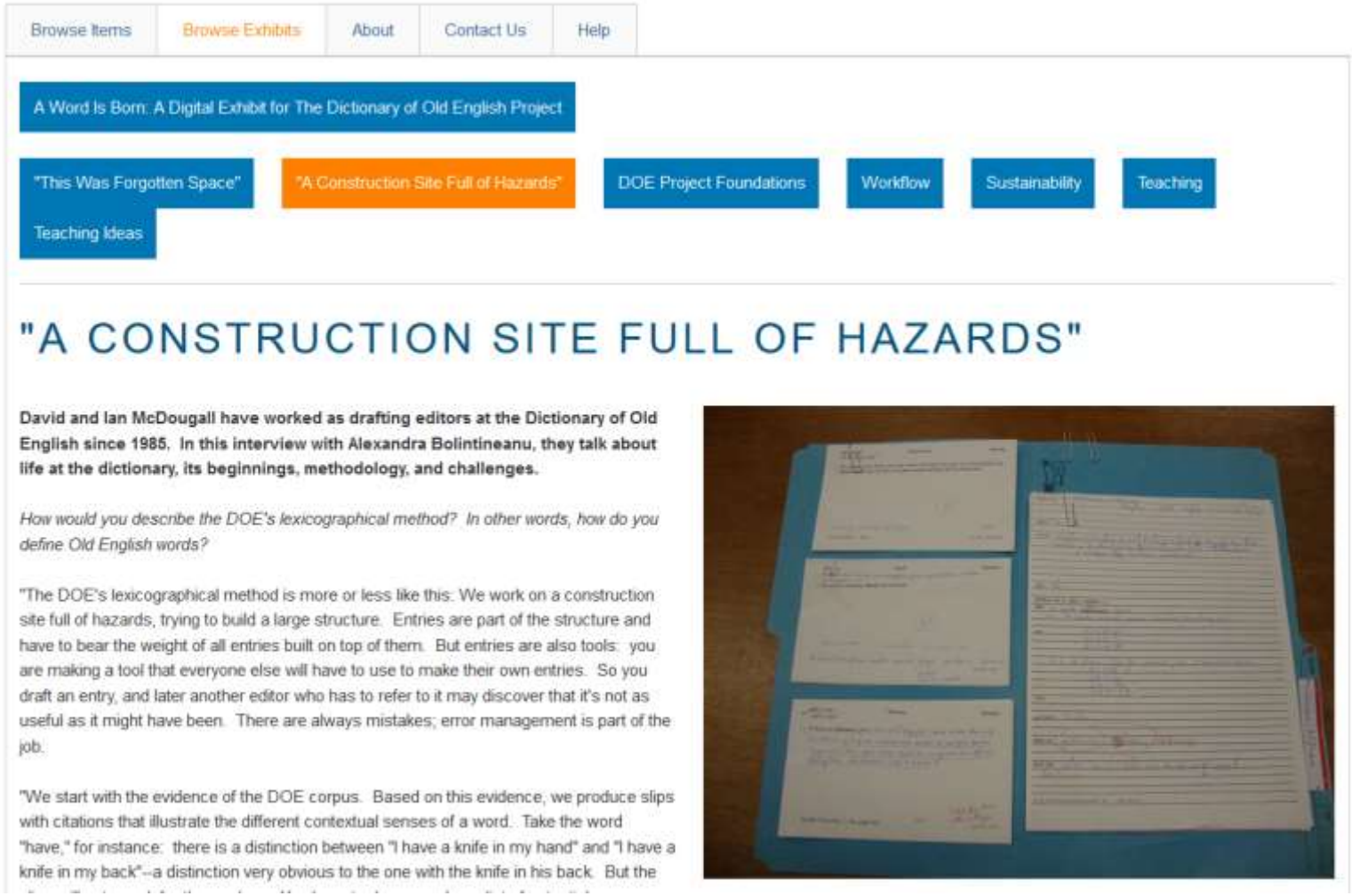
A Word Is Born: The Life and Work of the Dictionary of Old English

A Word Is Born showcases the life and work of the Dictionary of Old English, University of Toronto.



A Word Is Born: The Life and Work of the Dictionary of Old English

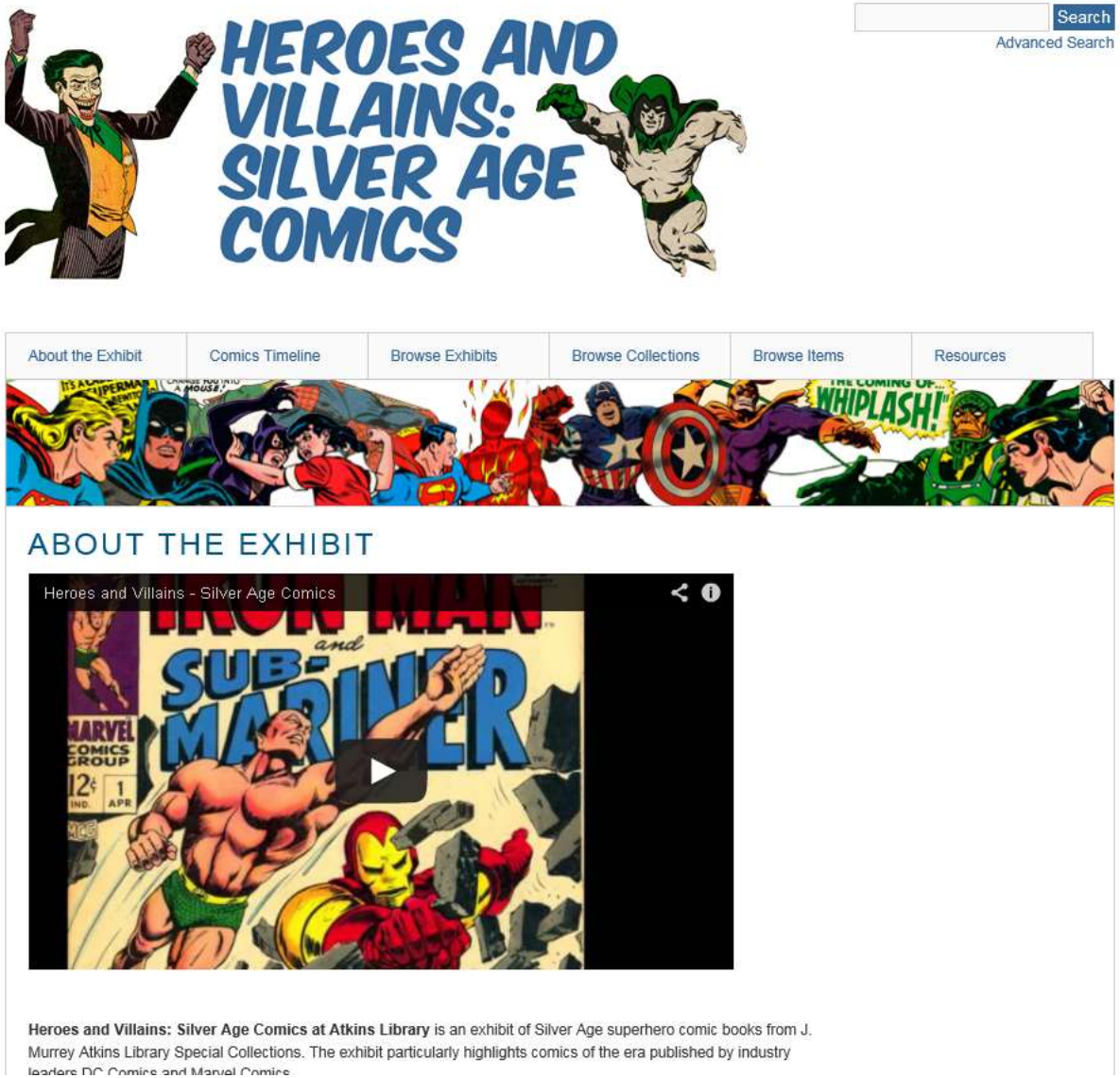
Part of an exhibit in A Word Is Born: An interview with the Dictionary's Drafting Editors, David and Ian McDougall, illustrated by photographs from the Dictionary's archives.



https://silveragecomics.omeka.net/

Heroes and Villains: Silver Age Comics

Heroes and Villains is a digital archive of Silver Age superhero comic books from J. Murrey Atkins Library Special Collections. Credits: Marc Bess, J. Murrey Atkins Library Digital Scholarship Lab, UNC Charlotte.

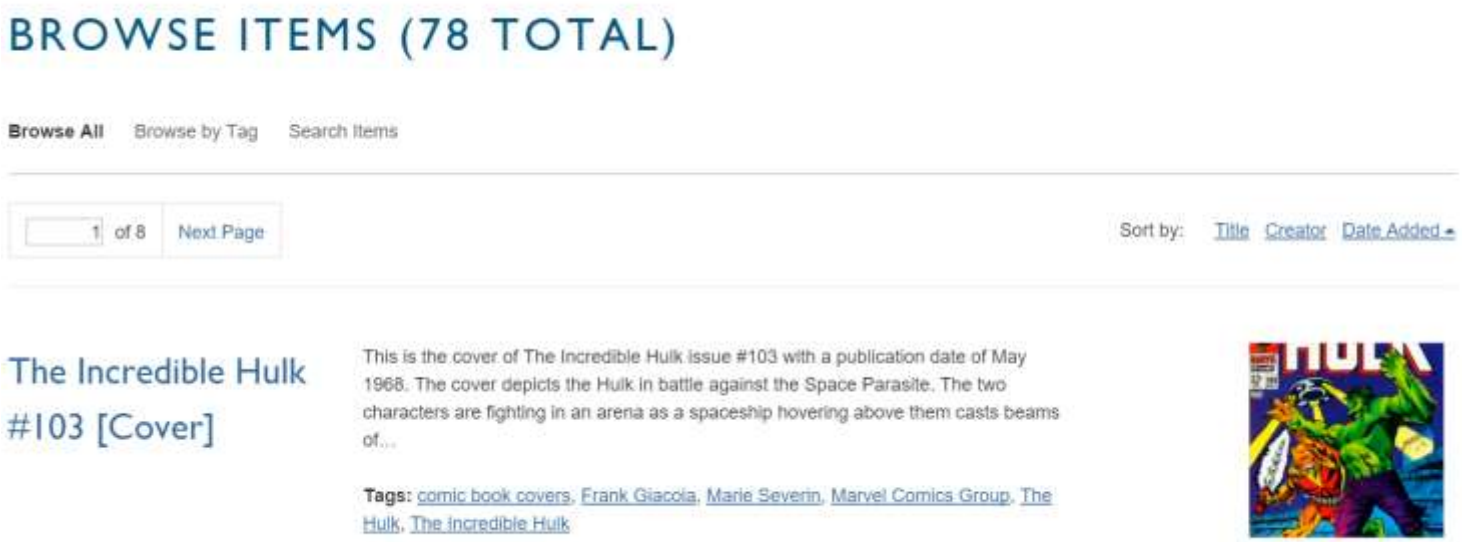


Omeka's Building Blocks

- Items (= content of Omeka)
- Metadata (= information about information – Dublin Core metadata schema)
- Collections (= a group of items; an item can be in only one collection at a time)
- Exhibits (= a narrative woven around some items; an item can be in as many exhibits as desired)

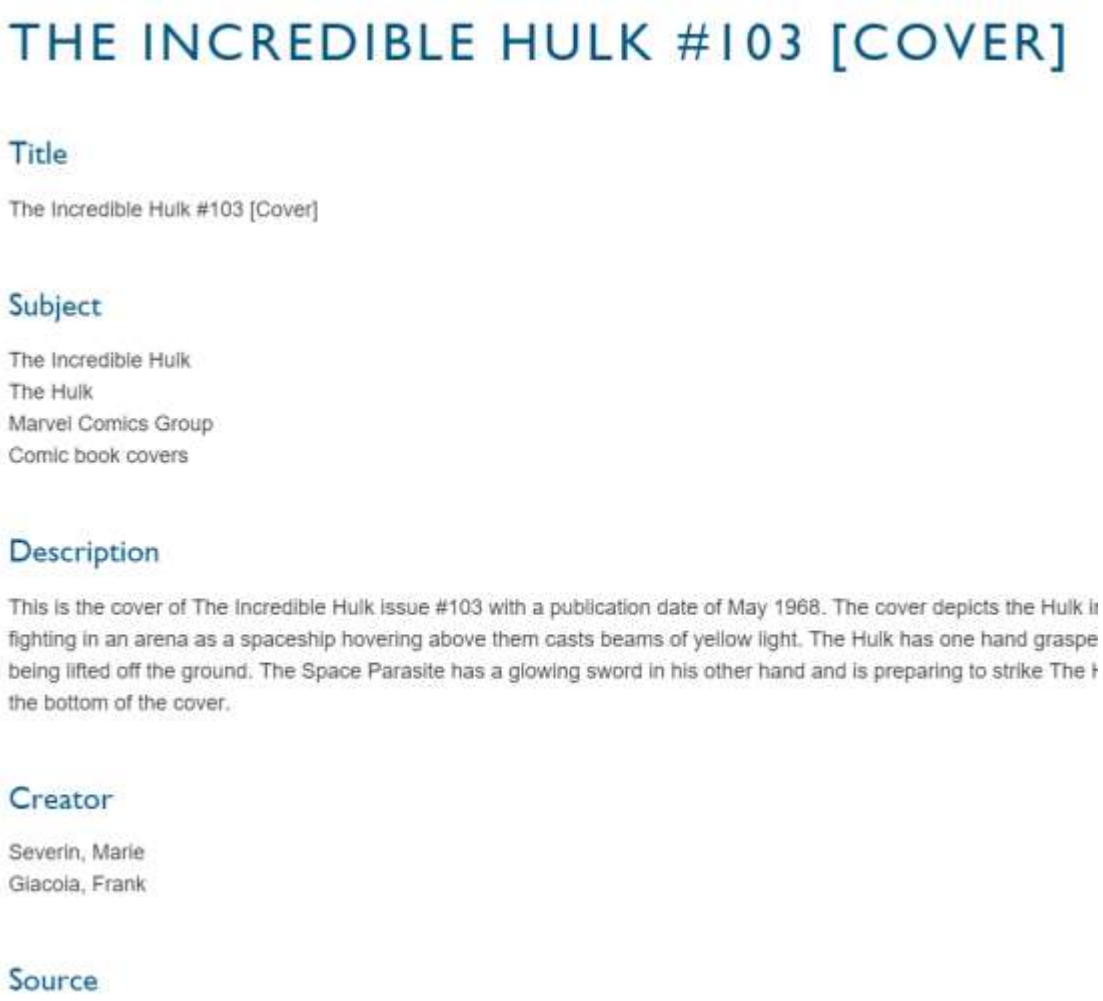
Items

- Items are the building blocks of Omeka collections. They have metadata (Title, Description, Source, Date, etc.) and may have digital files attached.



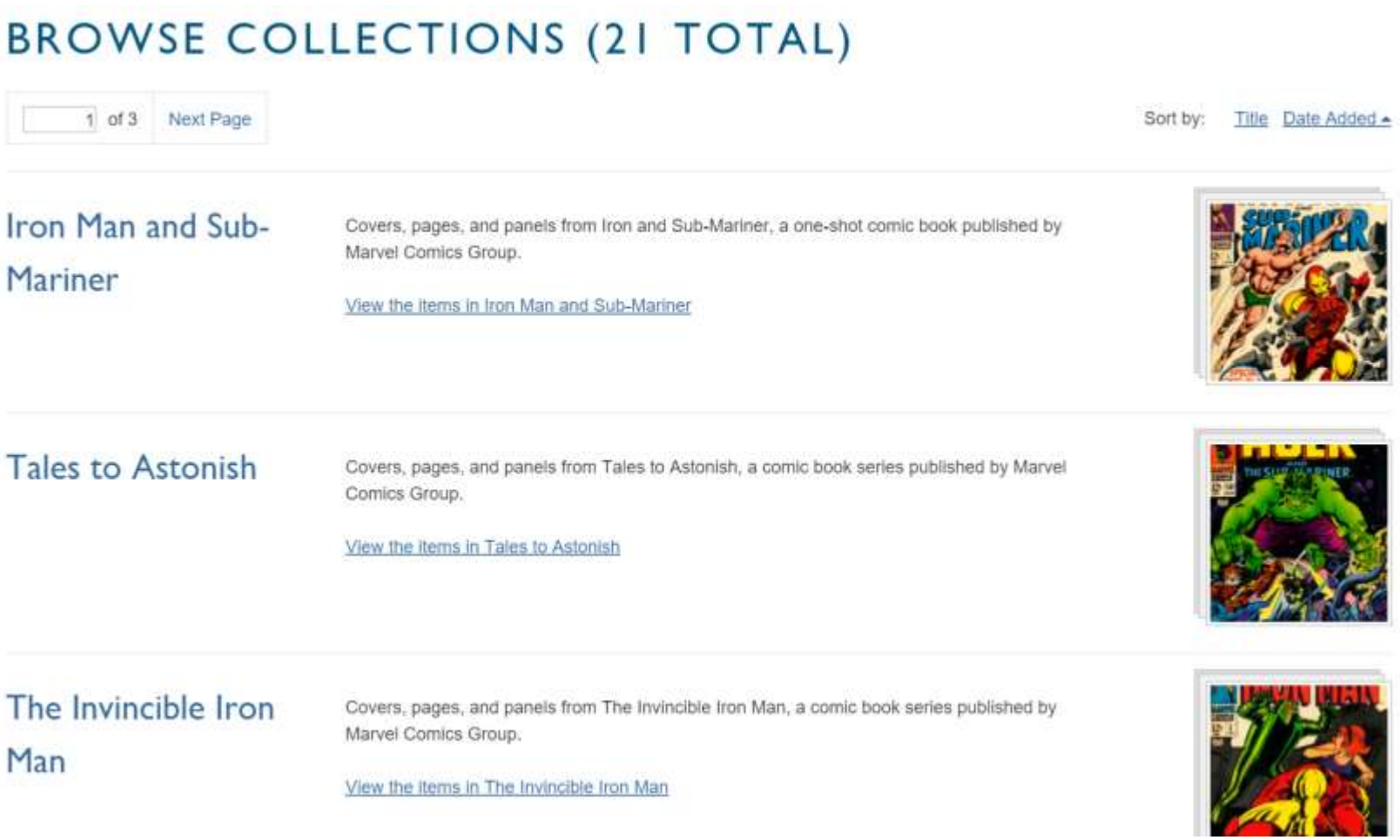
Metadata

- Metadata is structured data about data.
- For example, think about your library's online catalogue: it contains the records of books, about which it tracks items of information such as Author, Title, Publisher, Editor, Date.
- The metadata schema that underlies Omeka is Dublin Core, a basic yet internationally accepted metadata schema.



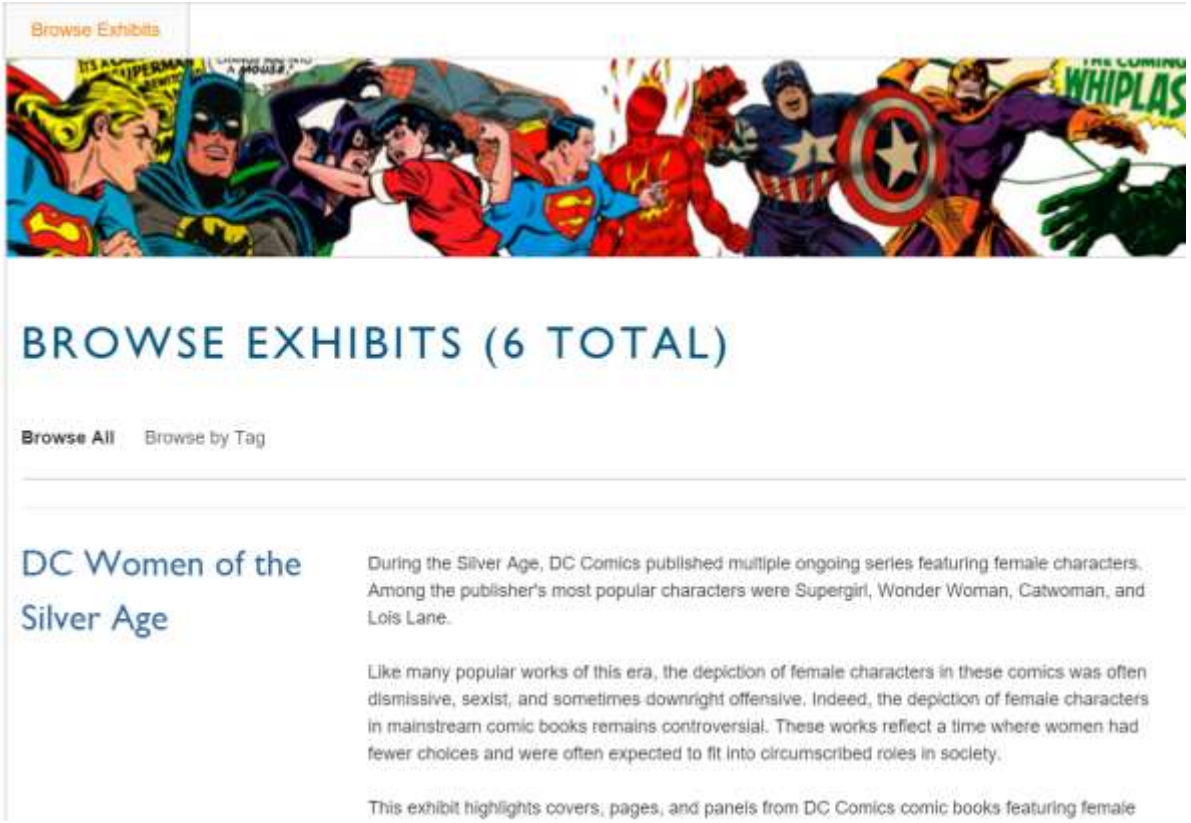
Collections

- Collections are logical groupings or “folders” of Items. An item can be in only one Collection at a time.
- Click on “Browse Collections”



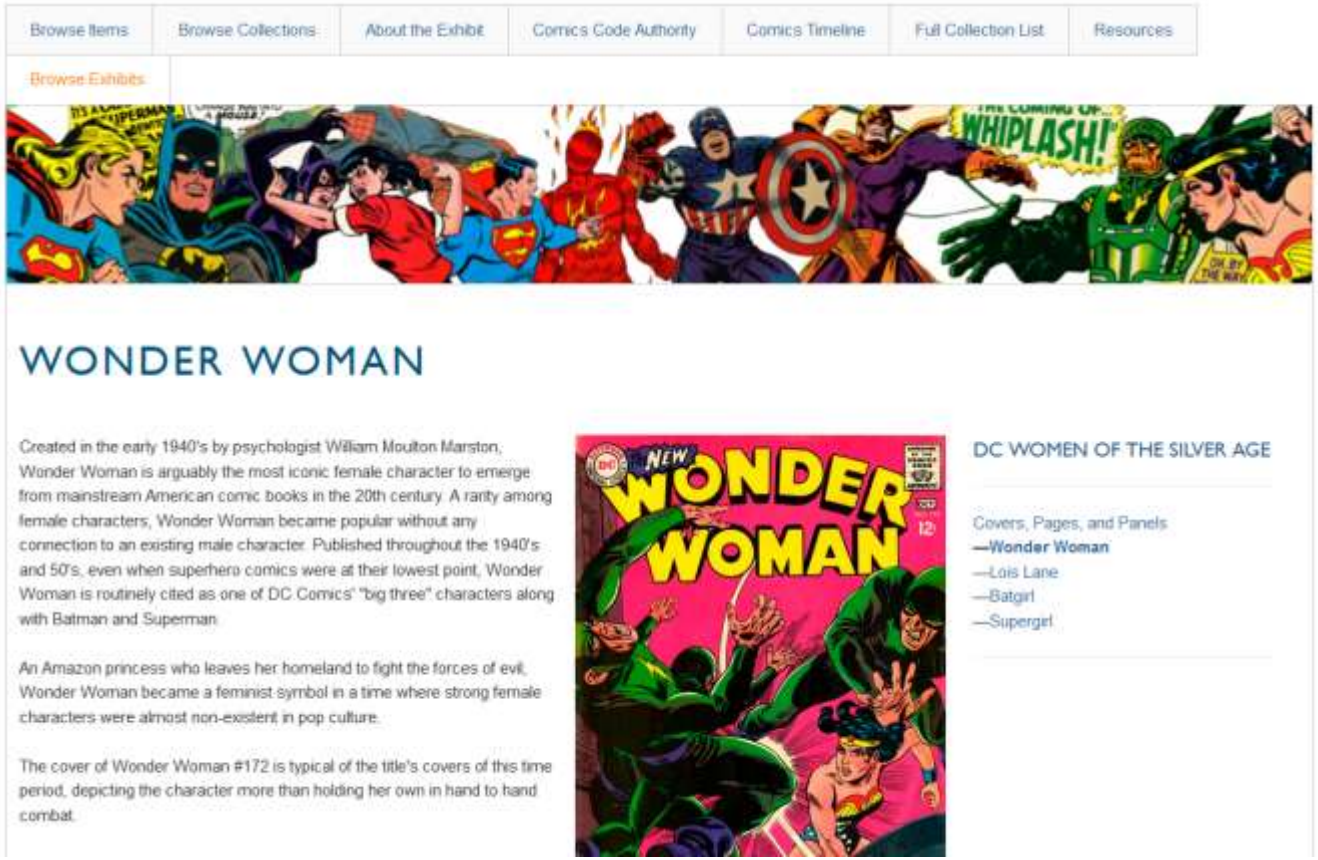
Exhibits

- Exhibits are narratives woven around some items, telling their story and explaining their significance. An item can be in as many exhibits as you, the curator, desires.



Heroes and Villains: Silver Age Comics

Exhibit: [DC Women of the Silver Age](). The exhibit is an Omeka Exhibit, a digital narrative showcasing a selection of Items from the collection. Note the exhibit's structure on the left.



Heroes and Villains: Silver Age Comics

The exhibit is a narrative about the historical evolution of Wonder Woman. Embedded in the narrative (left) are items from the digital collection (right).

WONDER WOMAN

Created in the early 1940's by psychologist William Moulton Marston, Wonder Woman is arguably the most iconic female character to emerge from mainstream American comic books in the 20th century. A rarity among female characters, Wonder Woman became popular without any connection to an existing male character. Published throughout the 1940's and 50's, even when superhero comics were at their lowest point, Wonder Woman is routinely cited as one of DC Comics' "big three" characters along with Batman and Superman.

An Amazon princess who leaves her homeland to fight the forces of evil, Wonder Woman became a feminist symbol in a time where strong female characters were almost non-existent in pop culture.

The cover of Wonder Woman #172 is typical of the title's covers of this time period, depicting the character more than holding her own in hand to hand combat.

This is also notable as one of the last Silver Age issues where Wonder Woman wears anything resembling her classic debut costume. The character's wardrobe was significantly retooled in issue #178 to create a more "mod" look.

Cover of Wonder Woman #172, penciled by Irv Novick

Supergirl joined forces with Wonder Woman for issue #177 as the two superheroines find themselves kidnapped and forced to fight "for the honor of marrying Klamos," a villanious despot intent on finding the perfect mate. The heroes eventually work together to defeat the villain.

The cover is interesting in that it's not immediately clear from expressions and posture whether the characters are fighting over a male character of their own free will.

Comic covers are individual items chosen by the exhibit's creator. Clicking on a cover reveals each item's metadata.

Create Omeka Site

Go to omeka.net. Click on Sign Up. Choose the Basic plan (free option at the very bottom) and fill in your information. You'll need to provide an email address for the link to activate your account.

Once you've signed up, check your email for the link to activate your account.

Your activation link will take you to the Dashboard of your Omeka account. Click on Add a Site. Give it your last name (for example, my site would be called bolintineanu.omeka.net).

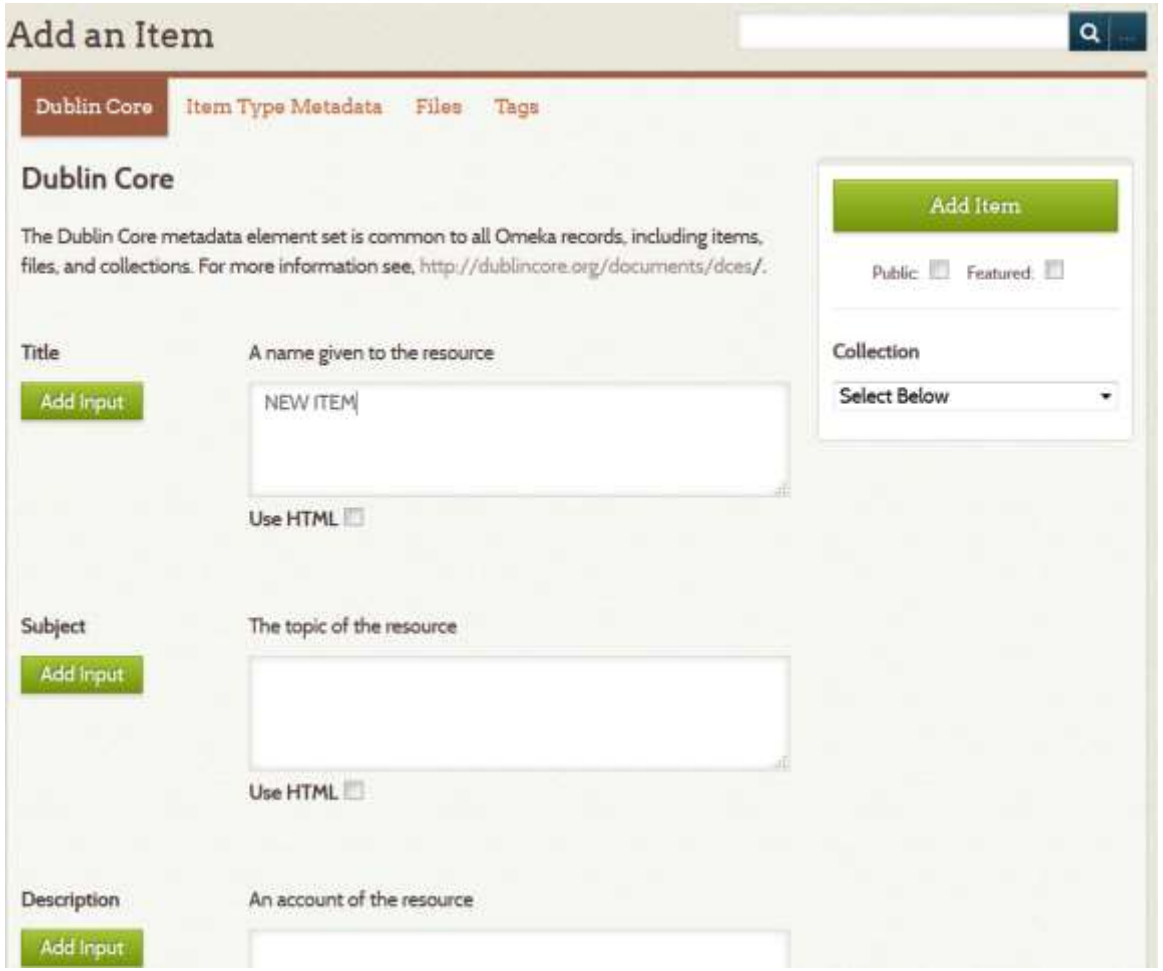
Congratulations! You now have an empty Omeka site.

Add an item

- Go to Dashboard and select “Items”
- Select “Add an Item”

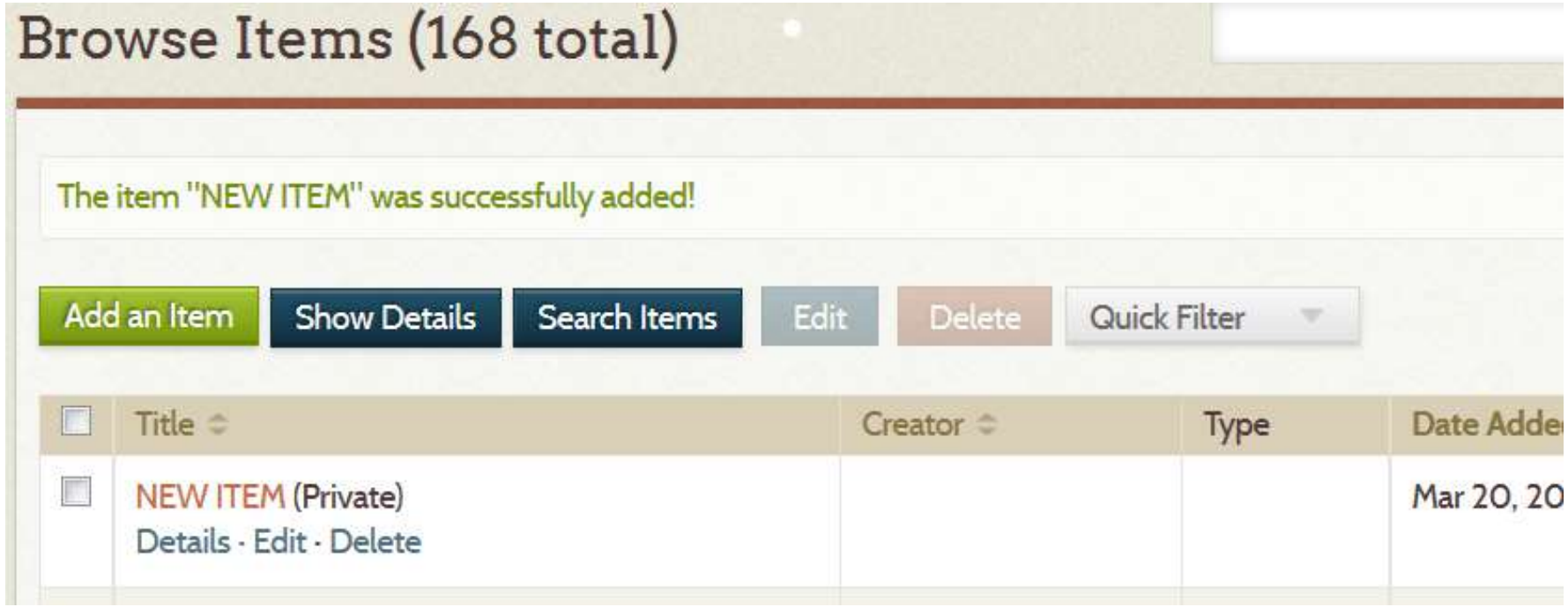
Add an item: Dublin Core Metadata

- In the Item's fields, enter the metadata: Title, Subject, Description, etc. Before you add items to your collection, you will have figured out how the Dublin Core metadata schema applies to your particular data: consistency across your collection is key.
- For example, for medieval manuscripts, you can list authors of the texts under Author: but what of known scribes, who may have also intervened in the text? Are they Authors or Publishers or Contributors ? Pick what makes sense and apply it consistently.
- For details on Dublin Core : http://dublincore.org/documents/dces/
- If you wish the Item to be visible on the public view of the site, check "Public" (under "Add Item").
- Click "Add Item" (green, right).



Add CRRS item + image – live demo

Add an Item: Success



Success: our trial item ("New Item") was created and added to the digital collection!

Omeka's Building Blocks: Collections

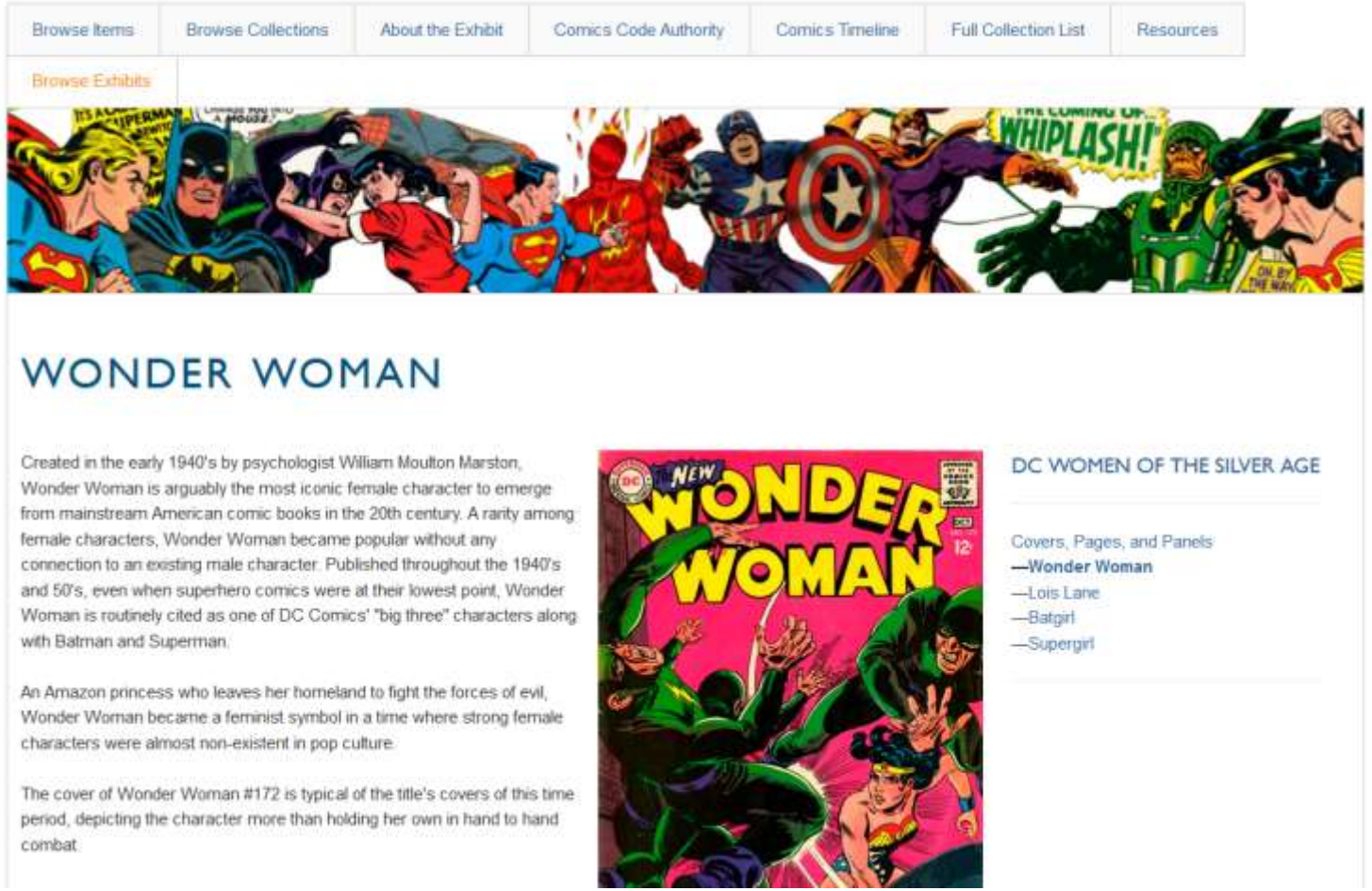
- Collections are logical groupings or "folders" of Items. An item can be in only one Collection at a time.
- Go to Dashboard and select "Collections"
- Select "Add a Collection"
- Fill in the metadata elements as desired, as for Item. (Everything in Omeka has metadata: it is turtles all the way down.)

Add an Exhibit: Plan

- The Exhibit is a narrative pathway through the collection; or, if you will, a digital essay based on the items in your collection.
- First write the prose for your exhibit and decide what items need to appear in it.
- To look pretty in the Exhibit, the items need to have picture or video files attached.
- Save your prose in a plain text file. Put your immortal prose somewhere safe. **Omeka Exhibits cannot be exported automatically: and if you ever delete yours in error, there is no getting it back.**
- Look at other Omeka sites and do a paper mock-up or a Pinterest board to work out how you want your Exhibit to look.

Add an Exhibit: Structure

- An Omeka Exhibit has:
  - An overview page
  - Content pages
  - The overview page displays an abstract (summary) of your exhibit
  - The content pages display text as well as items (remember, to look pretty, the items need to have files attached)
- You get to decide the content and layout of your pages

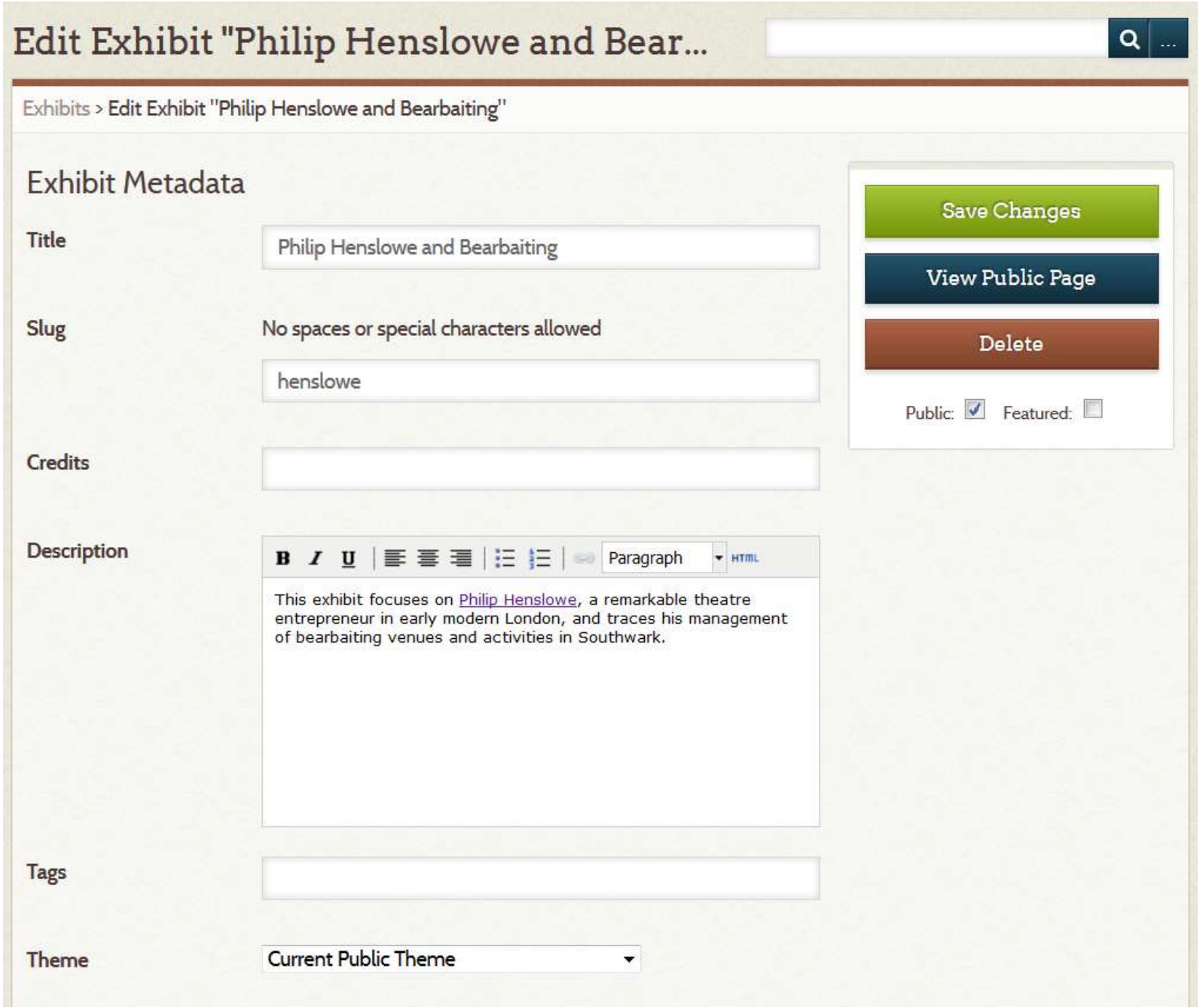


Add an Exhibit: Creation

- Go to the Dashboard and click on Exhibits.
- Click Add an Exhibit.

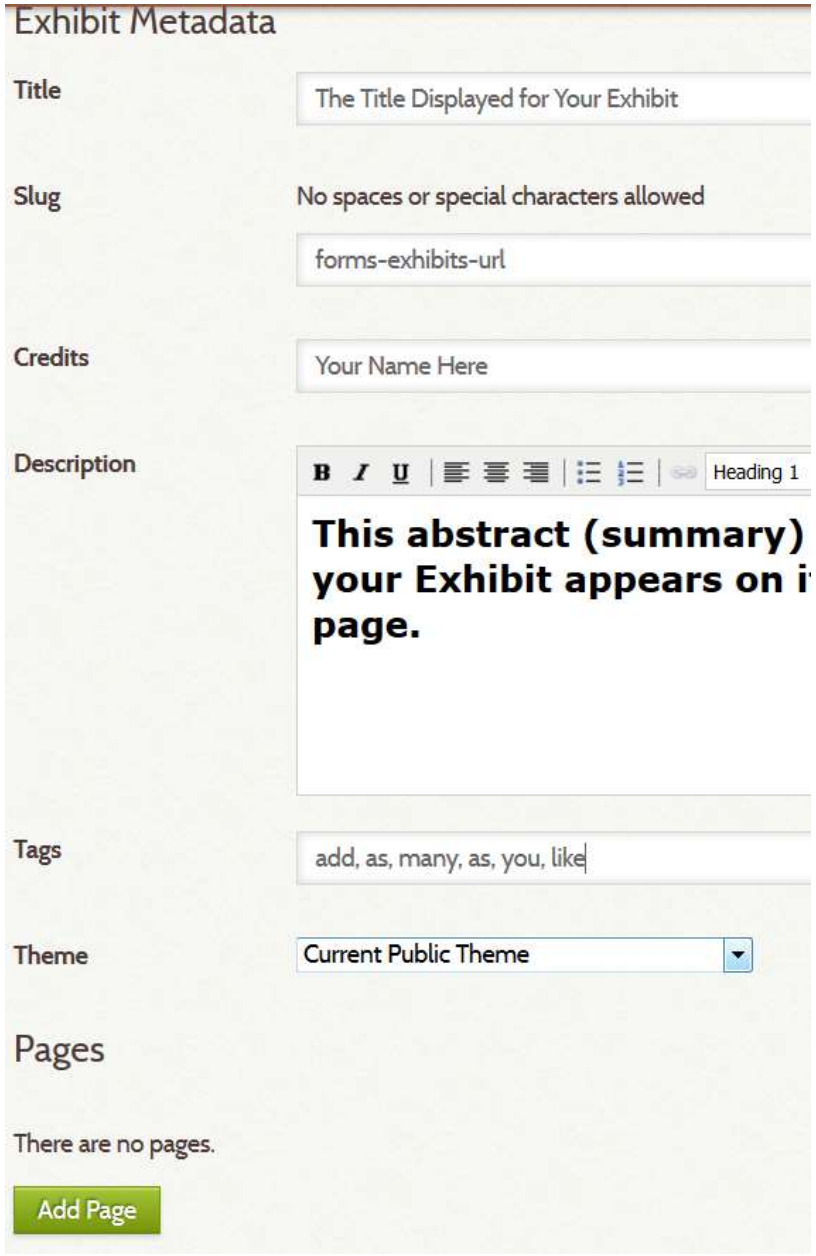
Add an Exhibit: Metadata

- Every Exhibit has metadata.
- Title displays as the Exhibits title.
- Slug forms the URL.
- Description is an abstract of the Exhibit that appears on its first page.



Add an Exhibit: Structure

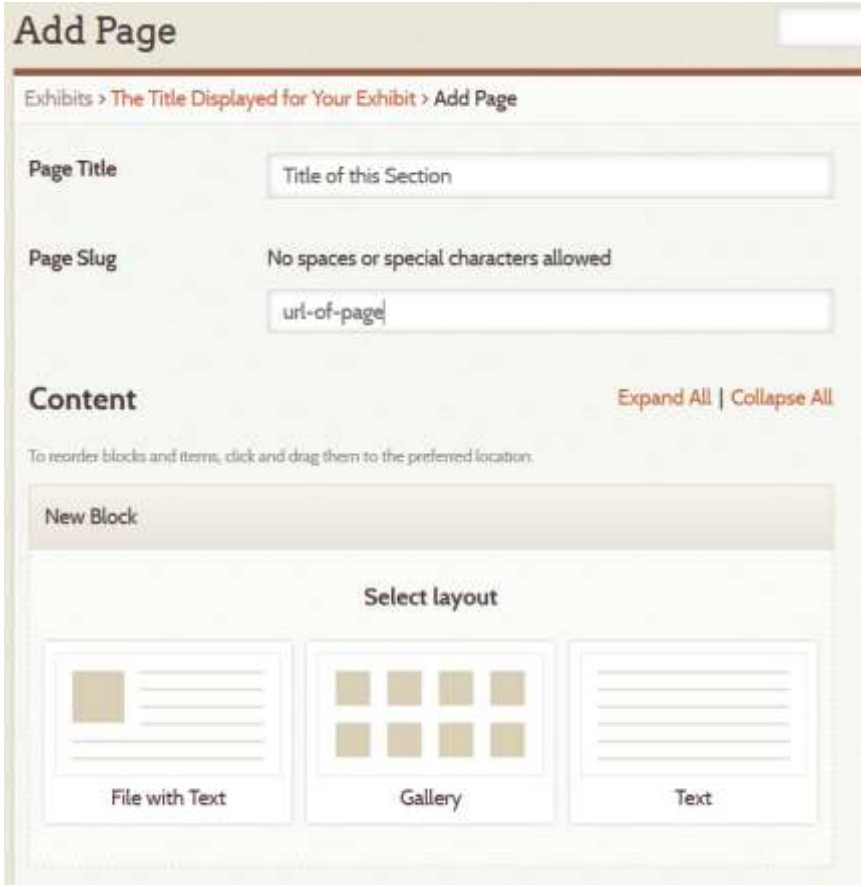
- The Exhibit consists of Pages.
- Each Page is a section of your Exhibit.
- To build your Exhibit, start adding Pages by clicking the Add Page green button.



Add an Exhibit: Pages

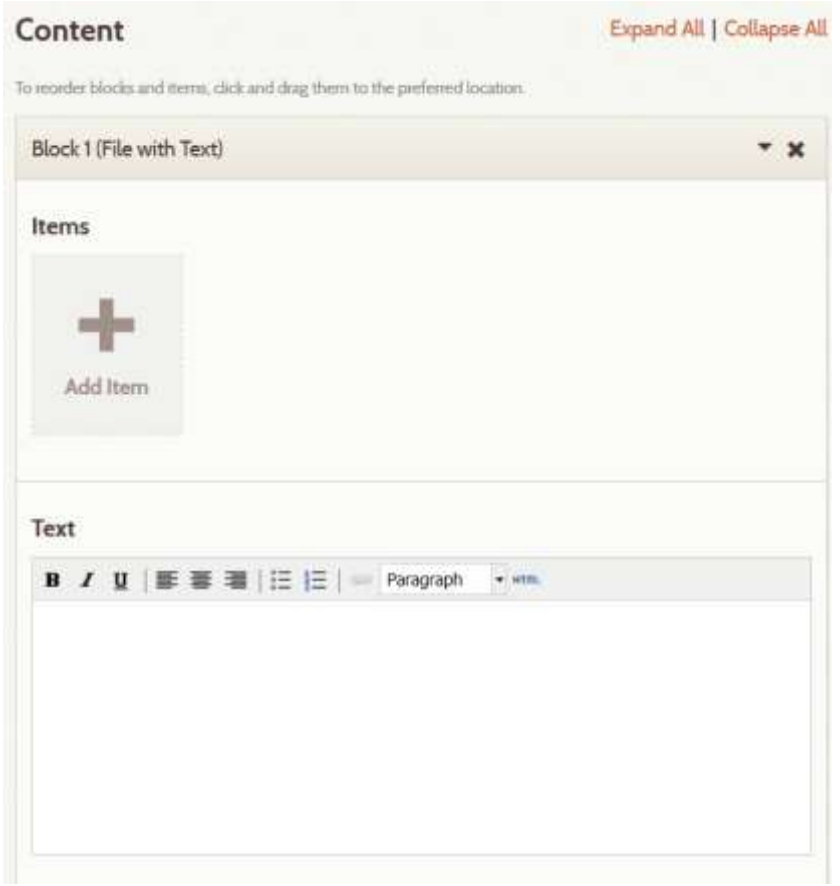
- Each Page may consist of multiple blocks:
  - Text and an item block
  - A gallery of items block
  - Text block

- To create a new Block, click on the desired layout. This block will be added as a section of this page. Your page can contain as many blocks as you like; you can drag them around to rearrange them.



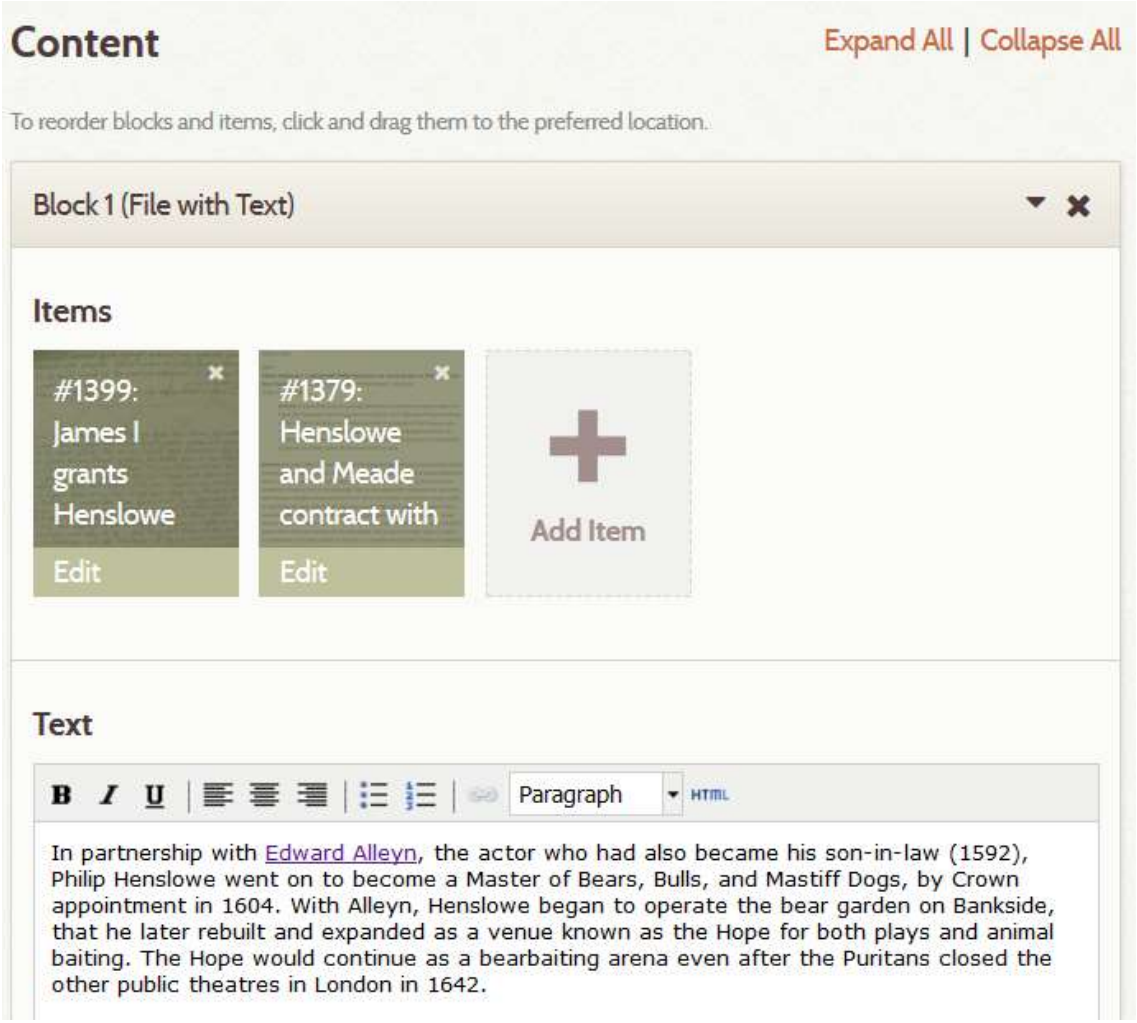
Add an Exhibit: Blocks

- Once you add a block, enter your narrative in the window labelled Text.
- Then click on the Add Item button to add items that illustrate your narrative.



Add an Exhibit: Blocks

- Once you have added your narrative and selected your Items, your block will look like this:
- To see what the Page actually looks like, select the View Publi Page button (right side of browser, in line with Content).

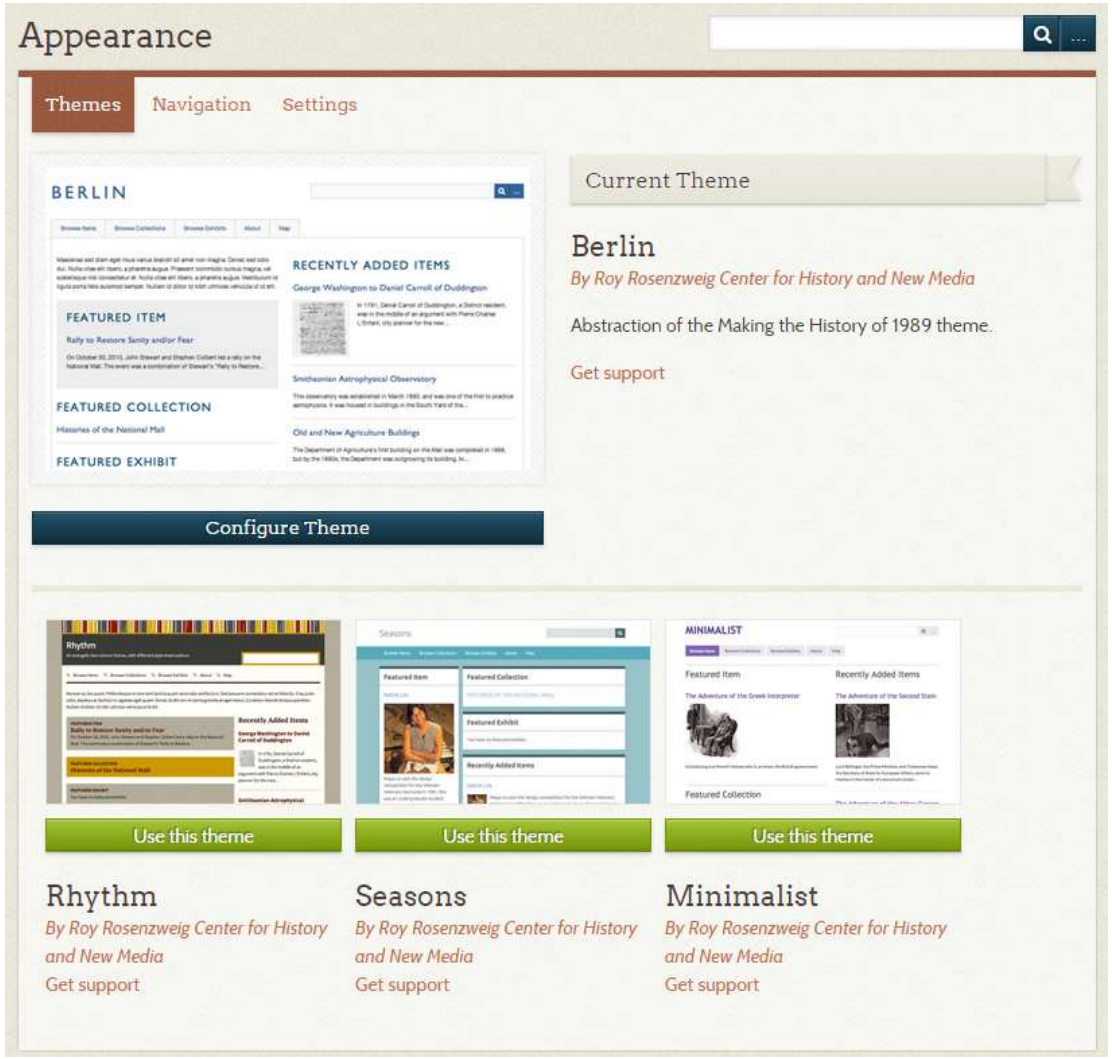


Add an Exhibit: Overall Design

- In your finished Exhibit, each Page will be a Section of the Narrative, illustrated with Items from your digital collection.
- You can use and reuse items from your collection in as many Exhibits as you wish.

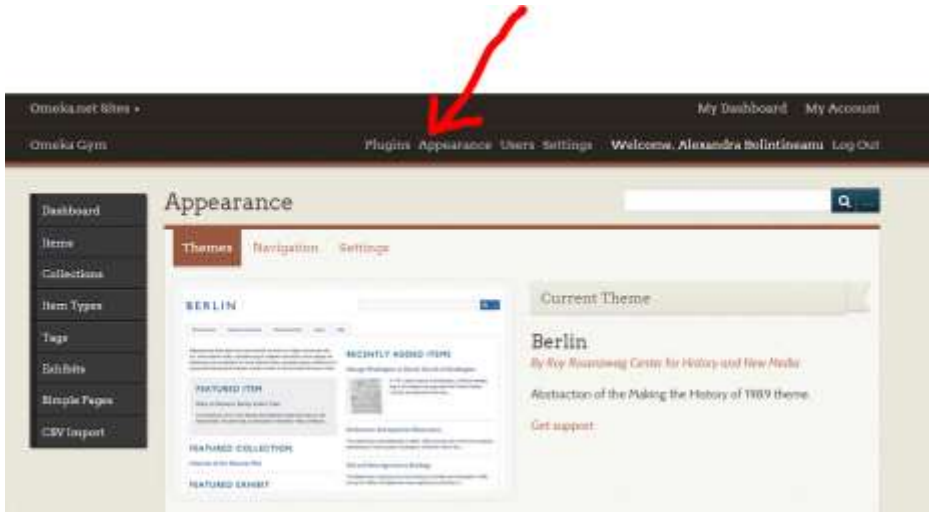
Appearance

- You can customize the appearance of your Omeka site by configuring its theme (i.e. colours, fonts, and layout of the site, or even of an individual exhibit) and adding a logo image.



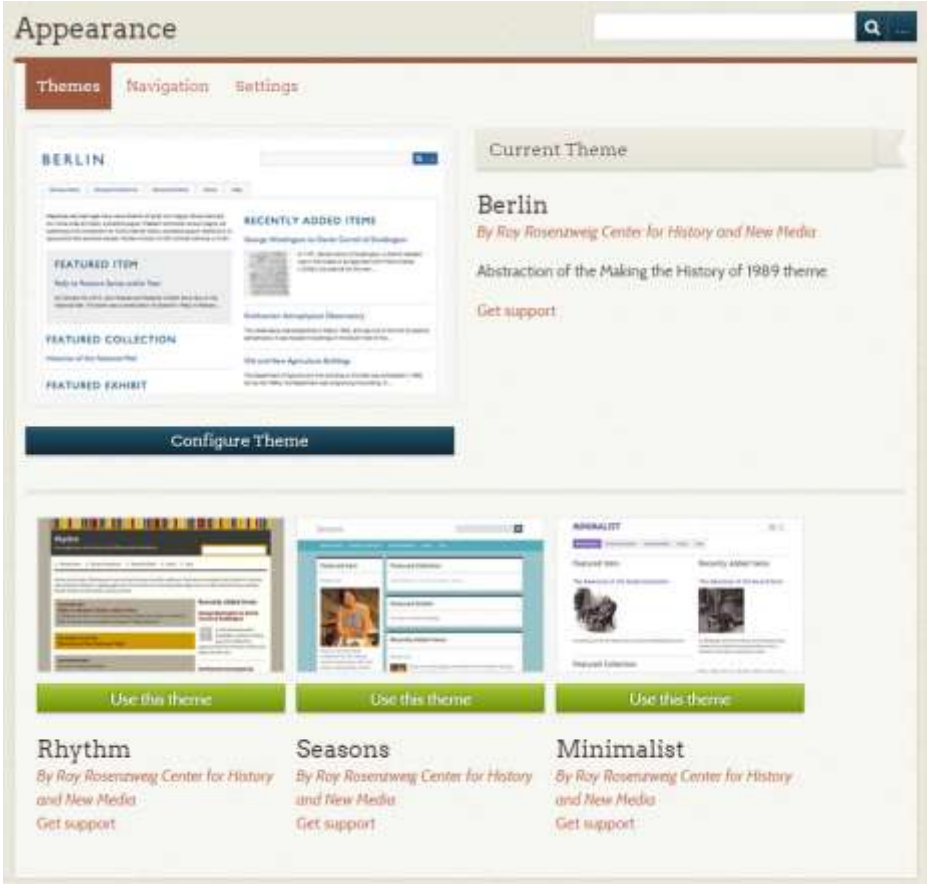
Appearance

- To configure the theme and add a header image to your Omeka site, first find or create that image.
- Go to Dashboard
- From the horizontal top menu, select Appearance



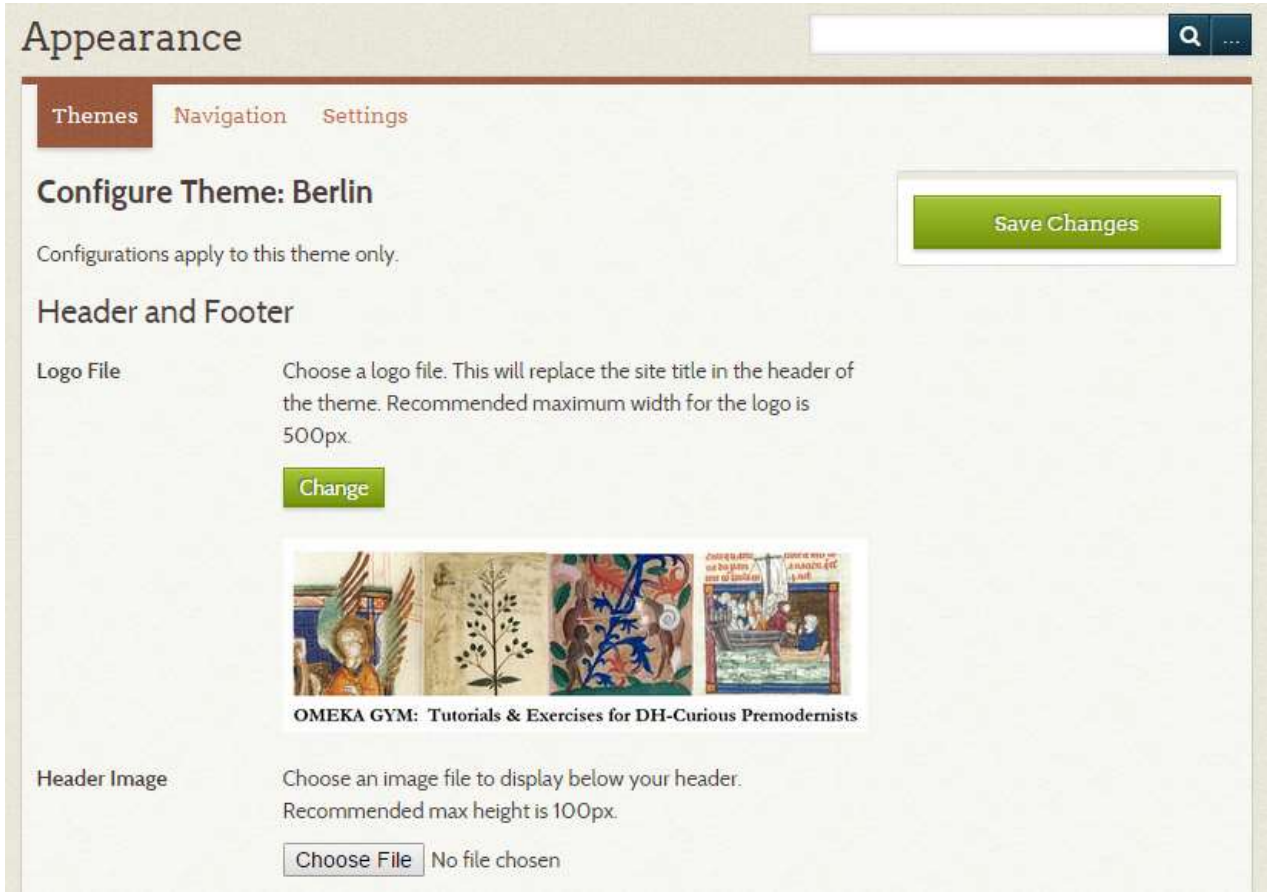
Appearance

- Choose from the themes available. Your choice of theme will determine the fonts, colour scheme, and layout of your site (or of your exhibit).



Appearance

- To configure your theme or add a logo for your site, select “Configure Theme.”
- Then add a logo or header image, paying attention to file size restrictions.
- Save changes.



Visualize & Display Items by Criteria

Browse by Tag

- No need to log in for this task!
- Go to your Omeka website's home page.
- From the public menu, select "Browse Items."
- Then select "Browse by Tag."

Visualize & Display Items by Criteria

Browse by Tag

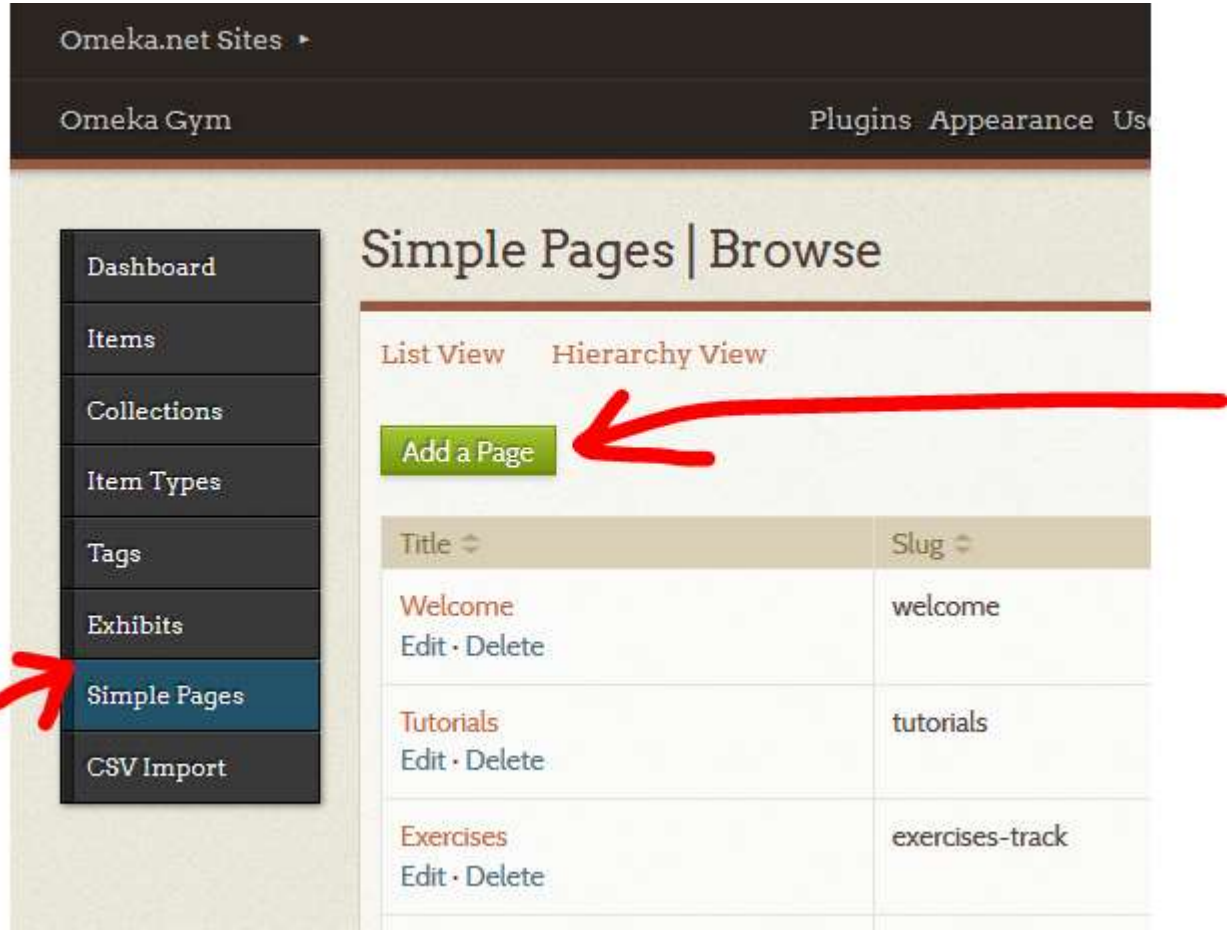
- When you select “Browse by Tag,” Omeka displays the tags in use for your items.
- In this view, tags work like word clouds: the bigger the tag, the more items have that tag.
- In this example, manuscript shelfmarks are used as tags. Cambridge Corpus Christi Library MS. EP.N.2 is the shelfmark with the most items related to it.

Visualize & Display Items by Criteria

- But what if you want more control? What if you want a page that displays all items with a specific tag -- for example, all items related to one manuscript's shelfmark?
- You could create an exhibit and manually add all items with the right shelfmark to that exhibit. But if you add more items with that shelfmark to your collection, these will be left out, and you will have to manually update your exhibit.
- There is an easier way: **shortcodes**.

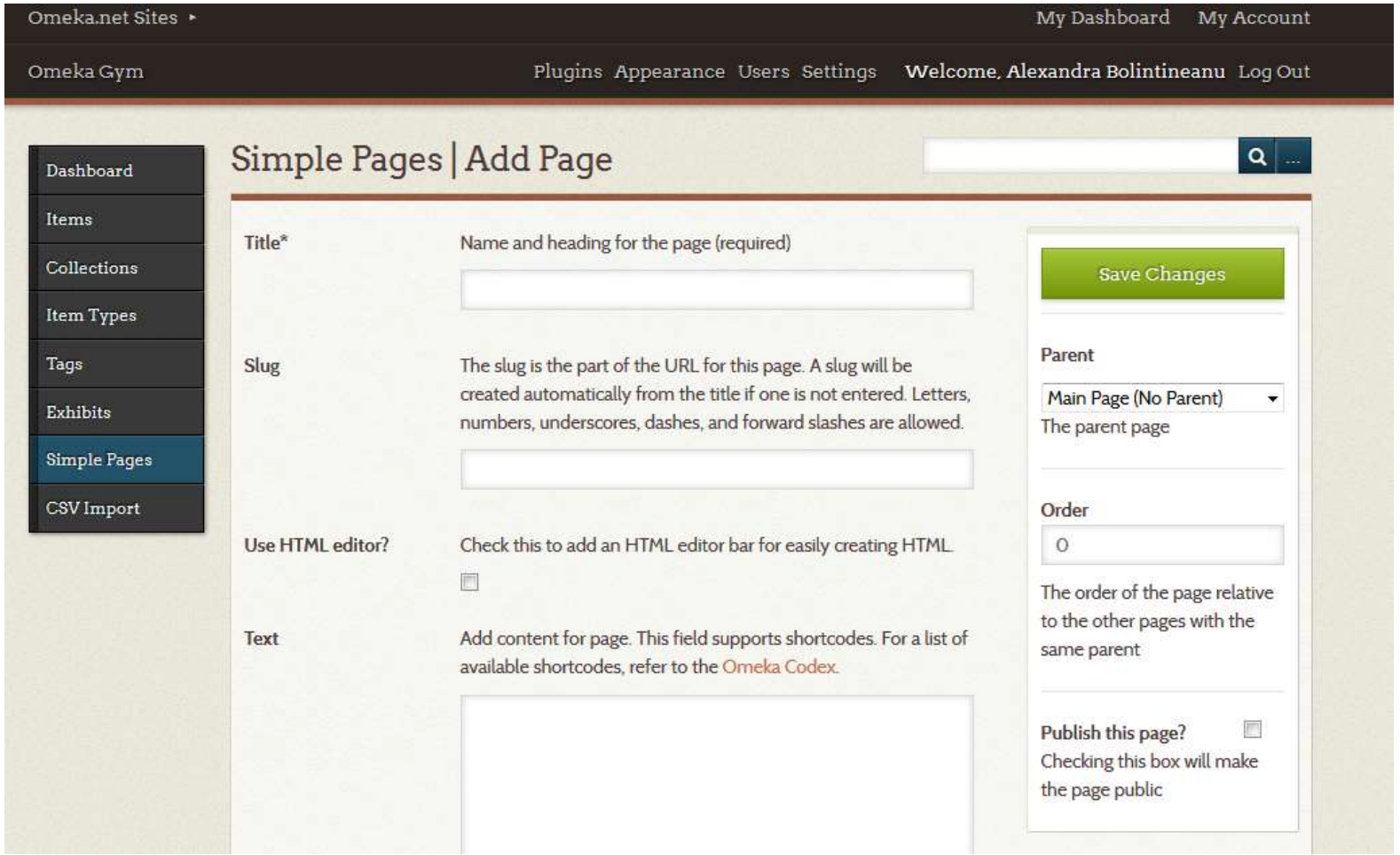
Omeka: Custom Pages

- You can create custom pages for your Omeka site.



Omeka: Custom Pages

- You can add content to the new page: either prose you've created, or items automatically selected from your site.



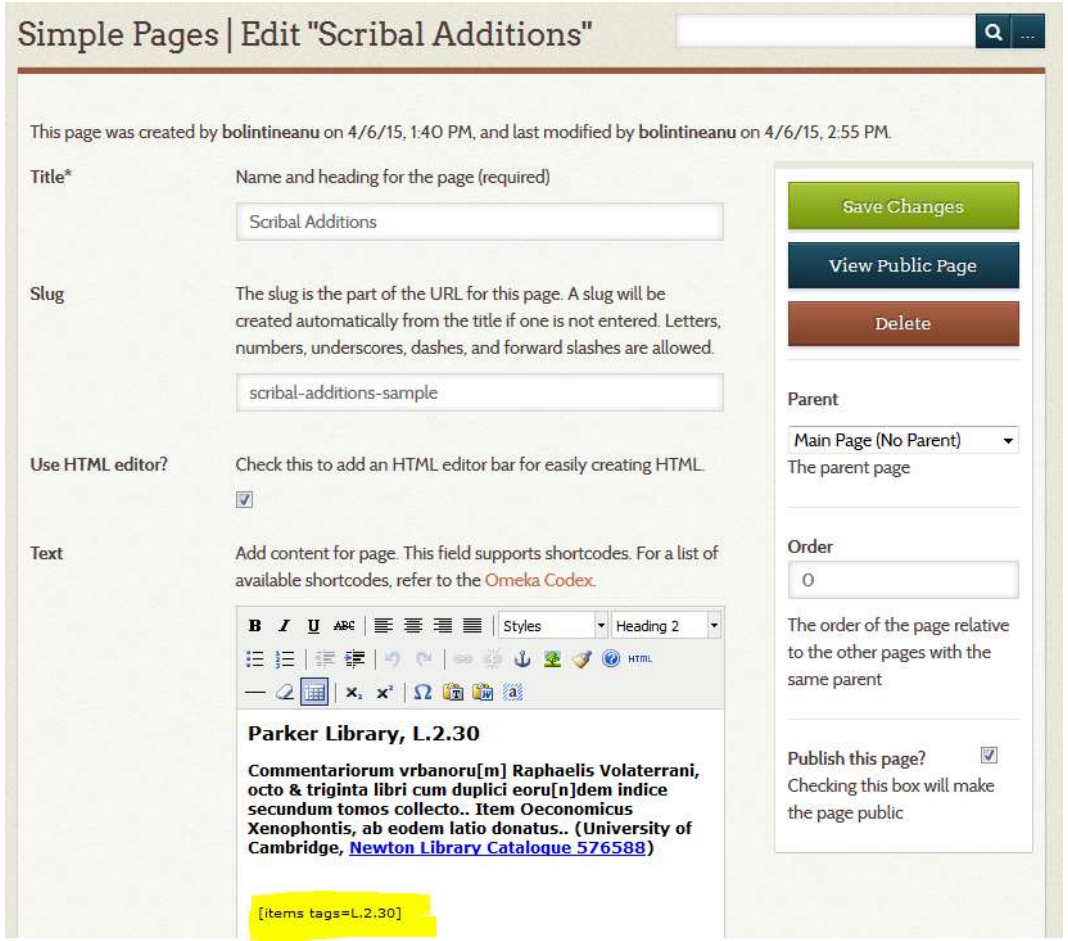
Omeka: Shortcodes

- Shortcodes are formulas you can embed in an Omeka page. These formulas allow you to select items that fulfill specific criteria

  (more on shortcodes: http://info.omeka.net/shortcodes/)
- To add a shortcode to a page, go to your Dashboard, select the Page, and select Edit. Then add the shortcode to the page's Text field. Save changes.

Examples:

[items tags=L.2.30] displays items bearing the shelfmark L.2.30 as a tag.



Omeka: Shortcodes

- [items tags=L.2.30] displays items bearing the shelfmark L.2.30 as a tag.
- Public view of the page: all items (in this site's case, annotations) related to shelfmark L.2.30
- What else can shortcodes do? Read more on shortcodes: http://info.omeka.net/shortcodes

Building an Omeka Site

- Decide if Omeka is right for you: it is not a preservation platform, nor a powerful search platform, but a beautiful, user-friendly platform for digital collections and collection-based digital essays.
- Design the information: what data will the Omeka site contain? What digital artifacts? How will its contents be described in terms of the Dublin Core metadata standard?
- Make a project plan with deadlines. But allow for disasters.
- Prototype: Make a site with 1 item. Create a spreadsheet with a batch of 5 items, of different types if necessary. Link up the files. Get feedback on the site from your collaborators.
- In fact, prototype and iteratively test each step of your process.
- Organize items in collections.
- Build exhibits: plan your exhibits (possibly on paper); draft and save in word processing software (because you cannot export exhibit contents from Omeka the way you can export items); then paste into Omeka.
- Document your process: crosswalks, spreadsheets, data processing scripts, exhibit narratives (save these in as plain a format as you can).