

The Developing Librarian Project @ COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

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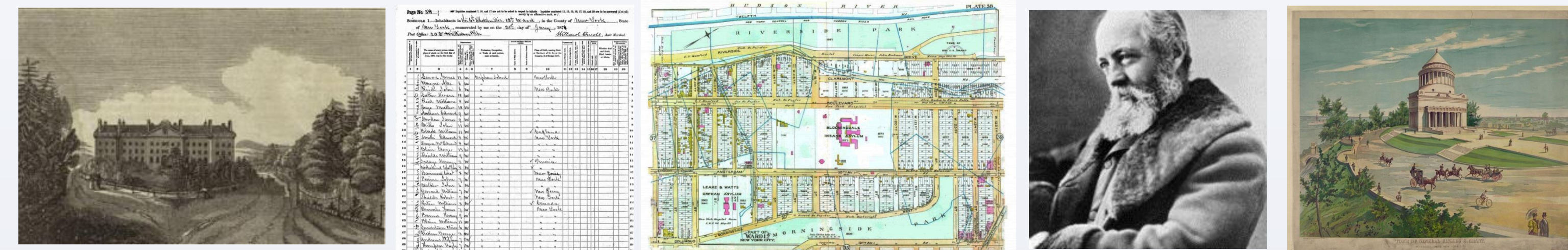
Introduction

In the early spring of 2012, as part of our planning for an expanded Digital Humanities Center, we initiated the Developing Librarian Project (DLP), a two-year training program with the goal of acquiring new skills and methodologies in digital humanities. The DLP is created by and for the librarians of the Humanities and History division. We were inspired by two influential publications, "Re-skilling for Research" published by RLUK and "Research Support Services for Scholars: History" by Ithaka S+R.

The program is based on the assumption that **learning must happen in context**, a model that has enabled us to apply the model of the Praxis Program of UVa; therefore, the training is project-based, with all participants engaged in creating a digital humanities research project as a team. This approach enables the team to learn about new tools in a sustained manner that parallels the ways humanities researchers are likely to use these tools. We designed a set of practical training units and exercises for the purpose of individual/group learning and skills development. We are also adding variations to the graduate student-centered models used in the Praxis Network, adapting the project to the needs of mid-career professionals. As a result, our model might inform similar projects at other libraries, from small liberal arts colleges to public and private research universities.

Project vs. Survey

Practical exercises are focused on individual contributions to a common and ongoing project to document the history of Morningside Heights and its environs (the area in Manhattan where Columbia University is located) in the period 1820-1950, a topic engaging the ongoing interest of all members of the division as well as many of our patrons. The aim of the project is to produce a permanent public resource while giving the team an engaging project of manageable scope to increase the likelihood of success. We are developing our digital archive using Omeka and Neatline at the core. We chose these open-source tools because we recognize their increasing importance in the humanities community and because of their emphasis on design and ease of use. Besides Omeka and Neatline, we are learning about many other emergent technologies that allow us to search, obtain, clean, manipulate, create, and analyze digital assets. In addition to digital literacy, we hope that the project will allow us to hone our "softer" skills. The fact that we are building together is already helping us bond as a team in salutary ways. Because of the exigencies of digital projects, we are also learning much about web design, usability, project management, and copyright law.



The Syllabus

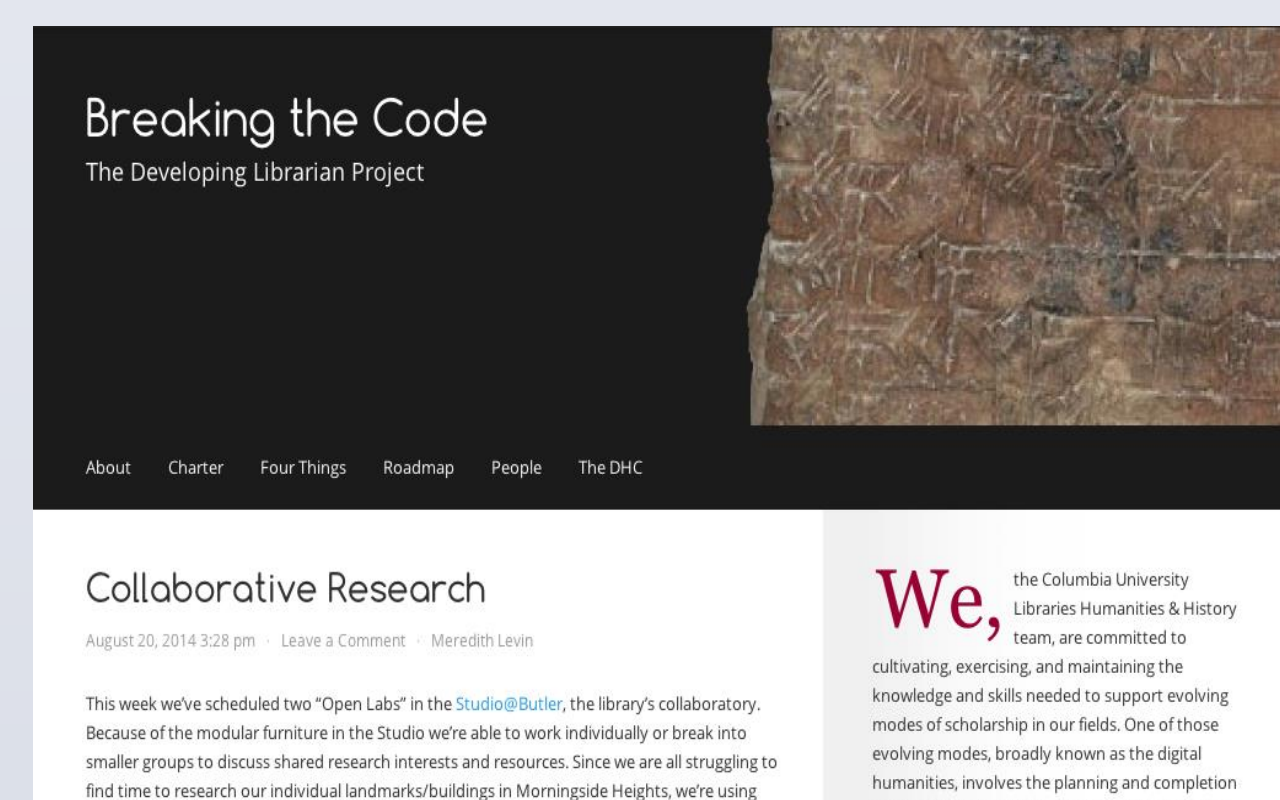
Developing Librarian: The Project Site

Installing WordPress: Introduction to Servers.
Basic Design Principles: Using Themes and Widgets.
Advanced WordPress Techniques: Plug-ins.

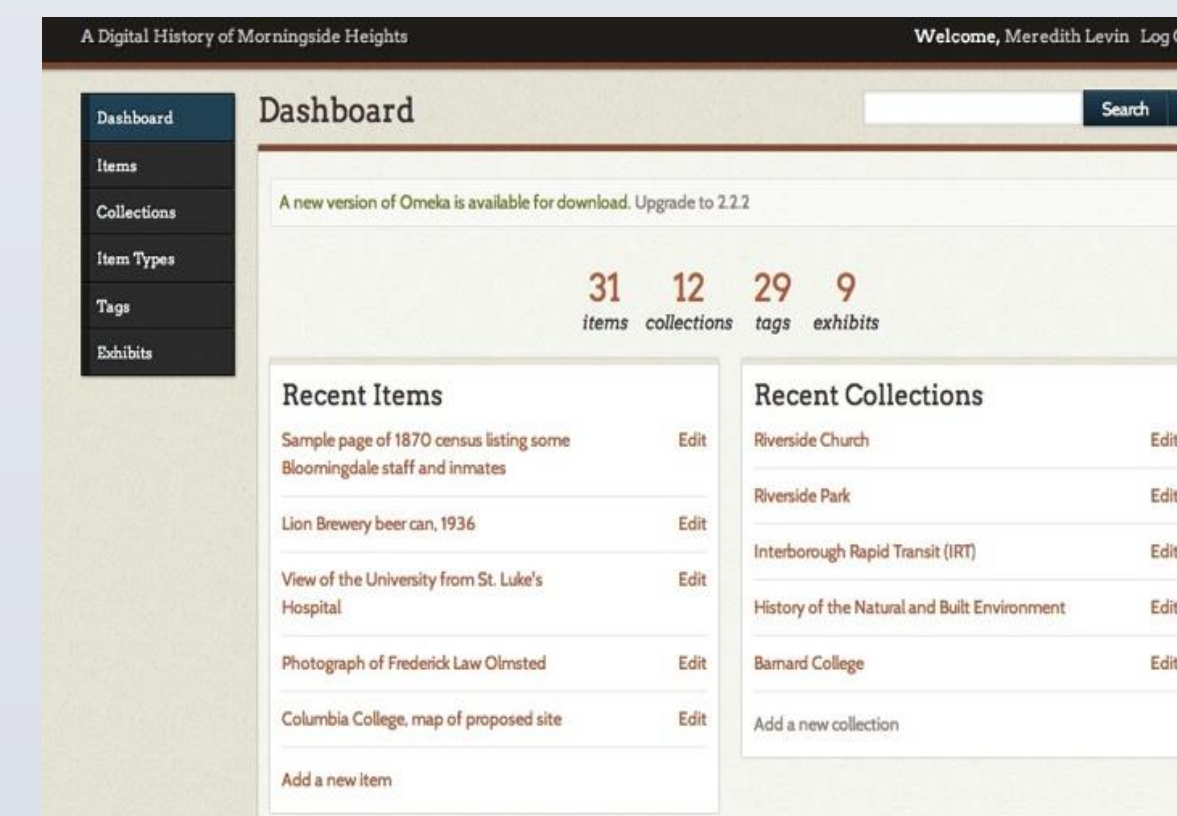
A Digital History of Morningside Heights: The Product Site

6/4 – Installing Omeka: Revisiting servers
6/18 – Items & Collections: Populating the Database
7/2 – Metadata, Dublin Core
7/16 – Copyright Law and Creative Commons Licenses
8/6 – Research Management
8/20 – Four Things, Blogs, Syllabus, Short Sessions
9/17 – Intro to Versioning: GIT (LITO) and Rackspace
10/01 – Git Continued
10/15 – Design Principles: Wireframes (CCNMTL)

10/29 – Design Principles: Color Palettes & Typography
11/19 – Design Principles: Advanced HTML & CSS
12/3 – Project Management (Mark Newton)
12/17 – Review
01/07 Tour of Municipal Research Center
01/21 Introduction to Programming I: PHP
02/04 – Introduction to Programming II: PHP
02/18 – The Data Cycle: Obtaining Data from APIs
03/04 – The Data Cycle: Cleaning up Data
03/18 – The Data Cycle: Preservation
04/01 – Design Principles: UX & Javascript
04/15 – Introduction to security: Protecting our site
05/06 – Outreach and Publicity



<http://www.developinglibrarian.org>



The Charter

Project Name

The Developing Librarian Project

Project Objective

A team of scholar librarians will create a digital history of Morningside Heights from 1820-1950. The project is important, but the process of learning emergent technologies and research methods is equally, if not more, important than the product.

Outcomes

Librarians involved in this project will...

1. Develop their own research interests and ability to produce digital scholarship.
2. Acquire the necessary skills to partner effectively with scholars on digital projects.

Deliverables

A WordPress blog documenting the intellectual and practical process of the project.

An Omeka site on the history of Morningside Heights, 1820-1950.

Timing and Constraints

The DHC will serve as the project's institutional home.

The project will be completed by January 2015.

Neither the DHC nor the Library assumes responsibility for the sustainability of the project or the blog documenting the project

beyond the two years of this agreement.

The project will be well-documented, including the documentation required for ongoing support, and the documentation preserved by the project managers.

Communication

Project members will make every effort to keep in regular contact by email or other electronic means. The preferred means of communication is email.

Deadlines

Project members will make every effort to attend meetings as arranged. If unable to attend, they will communicate this to the project managers as soon as possible.

Project members will jointly establish and attempt to meet self-imposed deadlines, in part through providing the project with lists of commitments, so that reminders will be sent out as a matter of routine.

Credit

When referring to individual contributions, a team member can speak of that contribution as his or hers. When referring to the whole project, team members should always credit the team. We encourage everyone to share with the team when they make public mentions of the project. When the project is completed, the team will work together to promote the process and project.

Assessment

The Developing Librarian training program depends upon a model for assessment that involves evaluation of each unit immediately following a training session, thus providing feedback to program designers before the next unit is presented. In addition, a comprehensive evaluation at its completion will measure the overall effectiveness of the training program. This assessment design is closely linked to the learning objectives outlined in the overall program syllabus, which are tied to skill-set gaps discussed in RLUK's "Re-skilling for Research" report. Hopefully, the assessment piece will help us and other libraries interested in implementing similar projects to learn from our mistakes and successes.

The Teams

Project Management

Ensure good communication and adherence to timelines. Keeps track of progress. Removes roadblocks. In charge of outreach.

John Tofanelli and Nancy Friedland

Research and Editorial Team

Verifies references and scholarship, completes environmental scan of similar projects, and pushes the team towards intellectual coherence.

Mary Cargill and Elizabeth Davis

Development Team

Responsible for functionality of site, administration of code base, troubleshooting, debugging, and identifying new technological directions for project.

Meredith Levin, Nick Patterson, Bob Scott and Sarah Witte

Design Team

Make recommendations on and implement how the site is organized, presented and contextualized.

Anice Mills, Karen Green and Barbara Rockenbach

*Alex Gil is a floater in all teams.

Acknowledgements

We have continued to learn from many librarians who are thinking in this space—Kari Kraus, Trevor Muñoz, Angela Courtney and Harriett Green, Dorothea Salo, Michelle Dalmau, Bethany Nowvickie, Miriam Posner, and Chella Vaidyanathan, and Kimon Keramidas, from colleagues at Columbia -- Jeffrey Lancaster, Melanie Wacker, Mark Newton, Breck Witte and the Library IT Office team, Chris Sala, Jocelyn Wilk, and many others. We are grateful as well for the support of our chiefs, University Librarian Jim Neal and Associate University Librarian Damon Jaggars.

