

Final Project Description: Curating a Digital Collection Using CollectionBuilder (Updated: 3/30/24)

Integrating CB into the Final Project of a 15-week Graduate Course on Digital Curation & Preservation

Developed for LIS/INFO 671: Introduction to Digital Curation & Digital Preservation

by Dr. Zack Lischer-Katz, Assistant Professor, School of Information, University of Arizona

Background

The construction of digital collections requires careful consideration. Design and curation decisions, including the selection of objects, the selection of formats, and provision of different forms of metadata (descriptive, technical, administrative, etc.), impact how different users will interact with the collection and explore and interpret digital objects within it. The selection of platforms for creating digital collections must also take into account long-term preservation concerns, since the collection itself may constitute a digital object that is determined to be of continuing value and in need of ongoing maintenance and preservation.

For this project, CollectionBuilder was selected as the platform for exploring these challenges and possibilities of curating digital collections. According to its website, “CollectionBuilder is an open source framework for creating digital collection and exhibit websites that are driven by metadata and powered by modern static web technology.” CollectionBuilder is built on static web page technology and has a moderate learning curve, making it a well-suited platform for exploring digital curation and preservation concepts and issues.

Project Overview

In this activity, students will first explore and evaluate collections that have been built using CollectionBuilder in order to develop a critical vocabulary for evaluating digital collections. They will then learn to use CollectionBuilder software, following tutorials and videos provided by the CollectionBuilder developer team. Students will work in project teams and use this knowledge to build their own thematic collections that draw together digital objects from multiple collections (found through <http://dp.la>). Students will present their projects and the rationale behind their selection decisions and metadata schemas. Students will reflect on the process of creating the collection, working on their teams, and what they learned about the ways in which curating digital collections can shape understanding and support the development of new knowledge.

Learning Objectives

After completing this project, students will:

- Understand how CollectionBuilder works and the creation and preservation advantages of static web design.
- Be able to use Github and the CollectionBuilder templates to create custom digital collections using static web pages;
- Understand how to work with different types of metadata for different purposes and different types of users, including discovery and retrieval, preservation management, etc.;
- Understand how organizing and displaying digital objects in collections shapes their meanings and the ways in which those digital objects can be interpreted by users;
- Understand how the assembling of collections can create new knowledge, i.e., by grouping materials together, different associations between objects can be emphasized and new narratives developed.

Assignment Timeline (for a 15-week course design, such as digital curation or digital libraries course)

1. **Week 6-7:** Students will start reviewing CollectionBuilder resources and existing collections
2. **Week 8:** Students will form groups and setup individual GitHub accounts
3. **Week 9:** Students will complete CollectionBuilder Walkthrough tutorial
4. **Week 10:** Students will meet in groups to select a theme and start to identify digital collections that they might want to select items from, via the Digital Public Library of America (<https://dp.la>) or other sources approved by the professor.
5. **Week 11:** In groups, students will create and submit a **project proposal** which will consist of:
 - a. A brief description and link to the collections selected
 - b. A theme and set of criteria for selecting a subset of digital resources from the collections related to the collection theme.
 - c. Potential metadata guidelines. Identify the metadata needs of the collection's potential users and other stakeholders:
 - i. What metadata would a user need? Identify the expected user groups
 - ii. What metadata would a digital curator need to manage the collection? Technical metadata? Rights metadata?
6. **Week 13-14:** Share Drafts of projects on course website (D2L or other learning management software)
7. **Week 15:** Students Submit Final Projects and Individual Reflections

Project Guidelines:

Each group of students will create an online digital collection using CollectionBuilder that will include:

- a. At least 20 digital objects
- b. A custom metadata schema (with documentation describing how it should be used)
- c. Complete metadata records for the digital objects based on the metadata schema
- d. Contextualizing information for the collection (describing the collection, its history and provenance of items, why the items were selected for this subcollection, designated user groups, and anything else relevant for interpreting the materials in the collection).
- e. Customize the display templates to create a visually appealing collection interface (make at least 3 updates to the default template).
- f. Publish the final collection and share a link with the professor and the rest of the class for review and evaluation.

Required Assignment Components

1. Project Proposal (1-2 pages)
2. Completed CollectionBuilder Collection (submit a link to the final website)
3. Individual Reflections (2 pages) - Each student submits their reflection on the project, including:
 - a. Their personal experience of creating the collection and working together as a group
 - b. Their critical assessment of another group's project (include title and link to project)

CollectionBuilder Resources

Introduction to CollectionBuilder Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZfXddTOpA1E>

Introduction to CollectionBuilder Slides: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1iuKSVSZOCzBPc-H_Y1Wue6XTwTkr8d0E/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=109775356458958890969&rtpof=true&sd=true

CollectionBuilder-GH Walkthrough: <https://collectionbuilder.github.io/cb-docs/docs/walkthroughs/gh-walkthrough/>

CollectionBuilder-GH Walkthrough Videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLt9zT3xACQo7q72AfphJzH41OiPcZrF4H>

Examples of CollectionBuilder collections to check out: : <https://collectionbuilder.github.io/cb-examples/> .

You can filter by student projects as well: <https://collectionbuilder.github.io/cb-examples/browse.html#student%20project>

Examples of collections built by students at DHSI 2023: <https://collectionbuilder.github.io/dhsi2023-share/>

Introduction to Static Web and Creating Digital Collections: Wikle, O., Williamson, E., & Becker, D. (2020).

What is Static Web and what's it doing in the Digital Humanities classroom? *db+lib*.

<https://acrl.ala.org/dh/2020/06/22/what-is-static-web-and-whats-it-doing-in-the-digital-humanities-classroom/>

Need Help?

Setting up a GitHub account: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNp6bqBDRr0>

Post Questions to CollectionBuilder Discussion Board:

<https://github.com/orgs/CollectionBuilder/discussions>

Or, you can also email the CollectionBuilder team here: collectionbuilder.team@gmail.com

Additional Collection Builder Resources

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1N-p3vWb-yhwapt7AxYhWG56pZXplR5Pq_FuV1rZpXfY/edit?usp=sharing