

Creating the Florida Views: Development and Vision Digital Library

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The availability of information in digital formats has made it possible for libraries and cultural institutions to open and share their collections as never before. Digitized objects can be added to a digital library (DL) space that can be viewed by audiences regardless of their geographical location; this enhances opportunities for scholars and casual Internet users alike to conduct meaningful research. Additionally, institutions can use digital library spaces as a curatorial mechanism unlike those that exist when housing physical collections. Choices about what to incorporate into a digital library can range from inclusion of full collections to selection of thematically related works. Collections that are not housed together in physical spaces can come together in cyberspace, adding a contextual dimension to the resources that can enhance research. The search capabilities related to perusing objects in a DL can sometimes surpass those of browsing through classic finding aids, since searches can be tailored in a number of ways to target specific information, such as subjects, dates, publishers, or creators. The following paper will discuss design specifics, issues, and the future of the Florida Views: Development and Vision DL.

Florida Views: Development and Vision

This collection showcases stereoscopic views from the late 19th and early 20th centuries depicting locations around Florida. The stereoscopic photographs capture a time in American history when Florida experienced tremendous growth in industry, development, tourism, and agriculture. Many of the cards serve to entice visitors and record the natural beauty and wonder of this unique geographic area. The stereoscopes are housed in the collections of the Matheson Museum in Gainesville, Florida. In addition to stereoview cards, this DL collection includes texts related to the history and development of the state. These texts are often complementary

resources to the scenes and descriptions on the cards and include a mixture of travelogues, histories, and government documents. All of these resources serve as record of a dynamic historical period where changes to the landscape and attitudes about progress shaped the culture, vision, and infrastructure that has guided development of the state to the current day. Each resource included in the collection (with the exception of two lesson plans) was produced between 1860 and 1920. These narrow production parameters give a glimpse into the thinking and scholarship prevalent at this point in history.

Building the Digital Library

Source Materials

The main contents of the digital library were initially a collection of stereoscopic views that I have been scanning for the Matheson Museum in Gainesville, Florida. The objects in this collection are both culturally relevant and old enough to be free from copyright restrictions. I used an Epson Perfection 2300 scanner to capture the images at 600 dpi and Adobe Photoshop CS4 to match the colors to the original stereoviews (which are often toned, hand colored, yellowed, darkened and/or faded with age). I also converted the original tiff files to jpegs and reduced the resolution on these copies for use on the web. I selected specific views from the collection in order to represent a diversity of geographic locations and subject matter, while considering alignment of items from a search standpoint. Therefore, I chose items representing several subjects that would appear together when searched, such as views of steamboats, Ocklawaha River, city street scenes, hunting, and landscapes. These items represent diverse geographic areas and topical coverage, but relate in terms of broad categories. The relative importance of a view, photographer, or publisher was also a consideration in this selection process. I chose 47 stereoscopes to include in the digital library space.

I also added other historical documents to the DL holdings. Using Wikimedia Commons and the Library of Congress Geography and Map Division website, I identified maps that were in the public domain; these maps related to the history and geography of Florida, showcasing railroad lines, steamer lines, geographical and historical developments, and aerial renderings of specific ports and townships. Each selected map was taken from the same time period that all the stereoscopes were produced, between roughly 1860 and 1920. All the digital reproductions were also in the public domain. I chose 7 maps to include in the collections, all of which I converted to jpeg format from jpeg2000 for use in the DL.

I also included a selection of books, travelogues, and government documents that reflect attitudes, history, and scholarship of the time. Included are items such as *Bloomfield's Historical Guide*, which is specifically mentioned in the promotional text on several of the stereoscopes, and historical accounts of early Florida. These documents help us to understand the research taking place at the time as well as the widespread attempts to promote tourism and settlement at the turn of the century. In order to locate public domain documents, both in terms of original dates and digital reproductions, I searched the Library of Congress, Google Books, and the Internet Archive. Once I identified prospective titles I accessed all the documents from the Internet Archive. The PDF files all came from the collections of the University of California and the Library of Congress digitization projects. They were downloaded from the Internet Archive because the files were reasonably compressed and all indicated appropriate usage rights. I located books initially discovered through Google Books in this repository as well, since the usage rights of the actual scans from Google were more ambiguous than those from the university sources. I included 28 textual resources in the DL.

Finally, I included two lesson plans in the collection. These were intended to provide interpretative materials related to the subjects covered by DL. I wrote the documents to accompany materials in the Everglades-related DL developed by Smathers Libraries; much like that design, I have included a section specifically devoted to teaching materials in the Florida Views DL. These lesson plans were created for Smathers, but we have designed them under a Creative Commons license to promote sharing and exchange of educational resources. Thus, they are freely available for inclusion here, where they fit well with the other contents.

Metadata

I used Dublin Core metadata elements for each item. Additionally, document-specific embedded metadata was captured; I extended this by manually entering additional information, such as the capture device used to create the digital documents. Right now each DC field with an entry is set to display in the DL; the additional administrative metadata is visible in the administrative view. (See the appendix for screenshots displaying metadata related to specific objects.) I would probably limit the fields that are displayed in a finalized design in order to avoid clutter. Descriptions, titles, media, publisher, subjects, tags and date would likely be the visible fields. The exploded metadata view is included now, however, since it is the most useful view for this class.

I also used the historic photograph metadata guidelines from the Special Collections Department at the University of Oregon to help in compiling information and mapping this to particular DC fields. For instance, in repeatable fields such as publisher it was important to note the publisher of the original photograph, when possible, as well as the publisher of the digital version. Following the conventions used at University of Oregon, I noted Matheson Museum (electronic version) in the publisher field. I chose these particular guidelines because they

seemed to organize and extend the use of the DC fields in a very logical manner; this was important to capture and record standardized metadata, but in a way that allowed the fields to be specific to institutional needs. I felt these guideline allowed rich descriptions of the documents that would ultimately prove useful for the Matheson Museum from a records standpoint.

Several fields make use of controlled vocabularies. I have used the Library of Congress Subject Headings and the Thesaurus of Graphic Materials for subject entries and name entries. Additionally, resource type fields were completed using the DCMI Type Vocabulary list. In order to take advantage of the possibilities for subject and keyword searching using both natural language and controlled vocabulary, I also added tags to the documents using natural language. This should provide a user-friendly way for people to search without the use of controlled subject terms. Adding tags has the additional benefit of allowing users to click terms and see a group of related objects; this enhances the browsing features.

Creation and Navigation

The DL was initially compiled using Greenstone version 2.84, but after a number of issues, including freezing and other glitches, I decided to use Omeka software instead, which was located through a tutorial from Florida State University. This was simply more stable given the hardware I was using, and ultimately proved easier for accomplishing display of the full DC element set, which proved confusing in Greenstone. The tutorials and help pages related to Greenstone were helpful, but not as much as those related to Omeka.

The Florida Views: Development and Vision DL is organized around a few main features. First, it is possible to browse individual collections. I divided the resources into four main sections by type: views, maps, texts, and lesson plans. This is to facilitate discovery of resources related by type so that users interested in only photographs can browse easily without

additional item types interfering. It is also possible to complete a basic search or an advanced search; the latter will allow users to search across DC fields or by limiting searches to individual DC fields (while searching across collections). This option is significant for users seeking all view cards created by C. Seaver, Jr., or all resources related to rivers in Florida, and so forth. It is also possible to limit searches to specific collections while still using DC field designations.

Issues and Challenges

Some of the more challenging aspects of developing this DL were finding additional resources beyond stereoviews and locating appropriate files. Some of the initial PDF documents of full-length books that contained appropriate usage rights were far too large for use; some of these documents were 250+ MB. This required spending time not only identifying a culturally significant resource, but subsequently finding the best particular file. Most resources that I eventually used were between 10 and 25 MB, for the PDF documents. Additionally, entering metadata for the stereoscopic images required some research. The items are not always dated, however it is possible to identify the specific year, or a range of years that it would have been produced. This was accomplished by searching for titles, photographers, and/or publishers. Sometimes the specific resource has been cataloged by another institution, and the date or creator it available on the Internet. Other times, it is possible to identify a date range by finding which years a particular identified photographer published under a certain company. For example, William Rau created views for the Griffith & Griffith Company in the 1890s, but published himself as the Universal View Company from the late 1890s until 1905. Therefore, it is possible to date an undated card from Universal using that range.

Other challenges related to using the development software. Initially, I had to install several versions of Greenstone prior to finding the correct one to work with my system. The first

test CD did not work, nor did any of these autoplay on either of the computers I tried; there seems to be some instability with using a 64-bit as opposed to 32-bit OS as well. Other issues included an automatic OS system update, which I forgot to disable, that updated Java to an incompatible version, and difficulty displaying full metadata with the objects. After dealing with issues I eventually had better results by switching to a different DL software. The glitches were simply lessened and the documentation was better.

Future Development

The current size of the Florida Views: Development and Vision digital library makes it manageable using just four sections to organize the collections. There are 85 total entries into the DL, with one map entry composed of two image files, and one text entry containing four PDFs representing the full volume set (89 files total). However, if the library was to expand to include more of the hundreds of possible view cards, the organization would need to change. Creating collections based on geographic area by city (i.e. St. Augustine, Green Cove Springs, Miami) or county (i.e. Clay, Palm Beach, Alachua) would be one option; this would make sense from a historical research standpoint. Organizing the images according to publishers (i.e. Keystone View Company, Universal View Company) would be another option; this would make sense from a photographic research standpoint. There is also the question of additional resources, and how they might fit into such categories. Text documents might fit well into geographical categories, as would maps.

This digital library could also benefit from incorporating different resource types, such as sound and movie files. It could also use a selection of archival documents such as papers related to important Floridians and events from the 1860 to 1920 time period, and oral history documents as well. Musical and sound recordings of natural history importance could help add

cultural and scientific context to the collection as well. A challenge with this however, is locating documents that are available for use. I found numerous papers and oral histories that would have been excellent additions to this DL, many of which were in the public domain. What were not freely available, however, were the digital surrogates of these resources. The documents, sound files, and transcriptions that I encountered were overwhelming copyrighted materials. Obtaining permissions to use these would be a significant undertaking for future development.

Finally, the DL could benefit from additional lesson plan materials in order to increase its usefulness to K-12 audiences. This group could benefit from access to the historical materials in the collection and the inclusion of interpretative resources would help make this easy to use. This would be good for outreach and increasing the audience base. It would be useful to include links to interactive web resources in such a section as well. This is also an area where the public could contribute to development by providing resources, which could be vetted and then included in the DL. In short, the possibilities for expansion, though requiring a different organizational design and structure, could enhance the value of this digital library space.

See the digital library here:

<http://flstereoview.omeka.net>

Appendix



Figure 1. Screenshot displaying browsing view. The image depicts browsing narrowed to map collection.

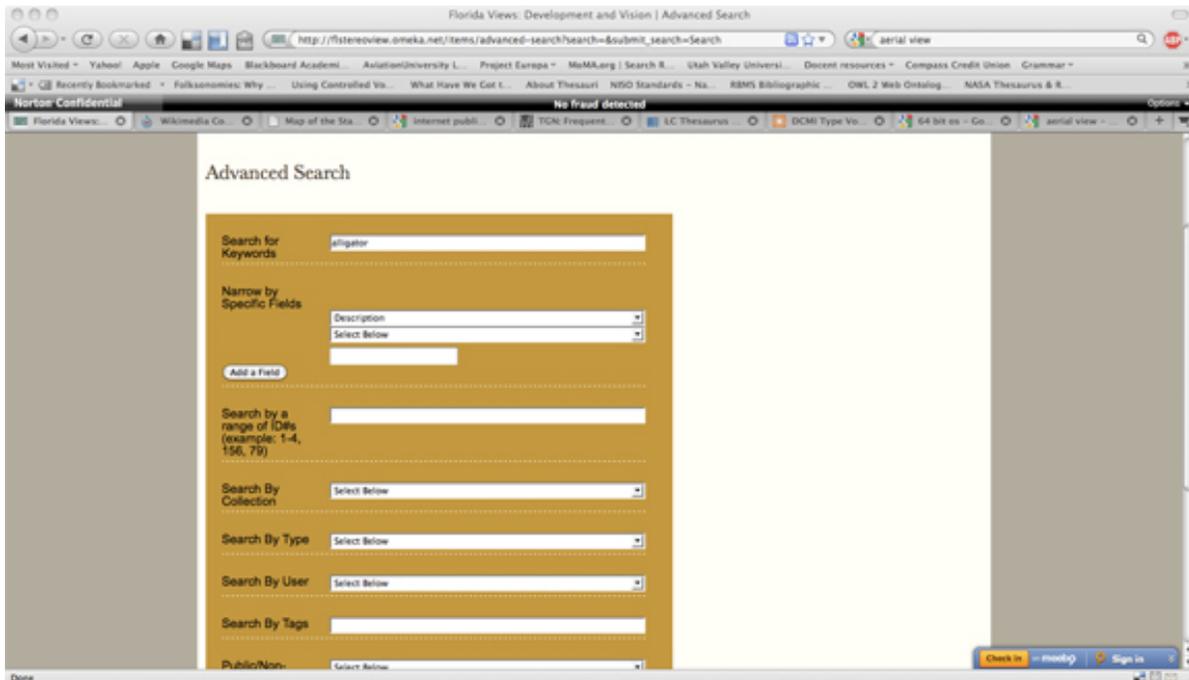


Figure 2. Screenshot displaying the advanced search options.

The screenshot shows a metadata page for a file named '001_90_11_AV318.jpg'. The main image is a stereoscopic pair of palm trees with text overlays: 'GEO. BARNER, NAGARA, PAES, N.Y.', 'AMERICAN GRAPHIC ARTS CO. NEW YORK', 'INSTANTANEOUS PHOTOGRAPHY', and 'The Plaza, St. Augustine, A Winter Resort in Florida. Copyright, 1894 by Geo. Barner.' The page includes sections for 'Format Metadata' (Archive Filename, Original Filename, File Size), 'Type Metadata' (Mime Type, File Type), and 'Output Formats' (omeka-json, omeka-xml). It also lists 'MIME Type Metadata' (Bit Depth: 8, Channels: 3) and an 'Exif Array' with technical details.

Figure 3. Screenshot displaying file metadata.

The screenshot shows a digital exhibit page for 'Deer in the Palmetto, Ocklawaha River'. It features a stereoscopic image of two deer in a swampy area. The page includes a 'Dublin Core' section with fields for Title, Subject, Description, Creator, Source, Publisher, Date, Rights, and Relation. It also has an 'About the Original Item' section with 'Date Added', 'Collection', 'Item Type', 'Tags', 'Citation', and 'Associated Files'. The page is part of the 'Palmetto Views Collection' at the 'Morrison Museum (electronic version)'.

Figure 4. Screenshot showing all DC core elements and additional administrative metadata.
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