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OMEKA IN GLAM (GALLERIES, LIBRARIES, ARCHIVES AND MUSEUMS): LEARNING FROM CASE STUDIES ABOUT INSTITUTIONAL ARCHIVES

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Abstract:
The responsibilities of traditional librarians have increased with the explosion of information in various formats other than print media. Librarians need a common platform to gather & archive the digital content, manage them efficiently and make them available to the users in an effective manner. The article attempts to report the research about the select success stories of the OMEKA in GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums) for the institutional archiving process. Further, it presents the features available in the OMEKA in line with the organizing, preserving and retrieving which were considered to identify this Open-source tool by one of the authors of this paper. Further, the paper discusses on how OMEKA can be a probable solution to archive the - documents, records and institute intellectual output - to facilitate the institute for appearing for the National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC) or National Board of Accreditation (NBA) process.

Keywords*:* Omeka, Content Management Systems, Open-source software, GLAM, Digital Resource Management, institutional repositories.

1. Introduction:

Librarians are known for multi-tasking and operating different administrative responsibilities by placing them in the shoes of administrators and academicians. Wearing the librarian hat, the professionals manage conventional documents, digital documents, historical records, photographs, AV collection, web content, publications, etc. Even though the information type is different, these fall under common genera of 'Information Resources'. Librarians and Information Scientists are known for managing all these resources for the benefit of the institution, organization and user services. To manage these, libraries have started adopting technology as and when it is introduced.

In this scenario, libraries are in a state of paradox and need an integrated tool that can support – archiving, content management, digital library and eLearning resource–sharing on a common platform. This will greatly help in administration, management, organising and service delivery. One of the authors of this paper was in the same paradox and conducted a search study for an open-source solution to his need. This paper shares the experience of the Open-Source Content Management System – OMEKA. The authors conducted the literature study on the use of OMEKA in GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums). The authors attempted to study the success stories and case studies to present the project report for the proposal to develop an Archiving Mechanism in an accredited Institute to support the preservation and accessibility of the documentation and the institute's intellectual output. The current study is the outcome of the exercise by one of the authors of this paper in identifying a suitable open-source tool for institutional archiving. The criteria identified for the evaluation is shared as part of this paper.

2. What is OMEKA?

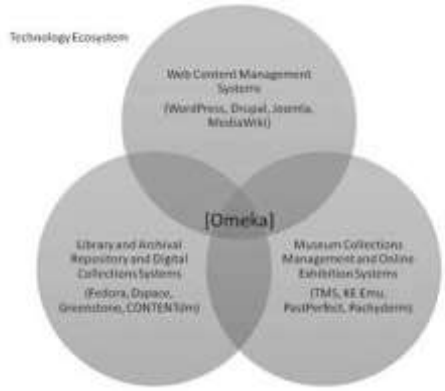
Omeka is a free, flexible, and open-source web-publishing platform for the display of library, museum, archives, and scholarly collections and exhibitions. Literally, Omeka is a Swahili word meaning 'to display' or 'layout wares'; to speak out; to spread out; to unpack (Tom, 2010).

Omeka, a content management system (CMS), plays a significant role in the GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums) sector. The Omeka Team has outlined key priorities for 2023, focusing on interoperability and integration with other systems in the GLAM domain. Omeka S, a specific version, aims to enhance data sharing between Omeka and other GLAM tools, facilitating collaboration and efficiency in managing digital content (Brey, 2021).

Widely used for digital exhibits, Omeka allows institutions to showcase collections online. Its application extends to digital storytelling workshops, where it serves as an open-source tool for managing digital objects and creating exhibits or websites. Institutions like Indiana University Libraries have utilized Omeka for online exhibits of digital collections, demonstrating its practicality in showcasing library collections online and the publications from the faculty members (Salse-Rovira et al., 2023).

As discussed, the multi-faceted activity of libraries need an integrated system which helps the information manager to manage the information resources in digital form in terms of - gathering, organizing, collating, developing and presenting in a systematic content management environment. Omeka falls at a crossroad of Web Content Management, Collections Management, and Archival Digital Collections Systems for the said activities of an information manager. Figure 1 below explains the technological ecosystem on which Omeka is conceptualized and serving the information resources management in different verticals.

Figure 1: Technological Ecosystem of Omeka



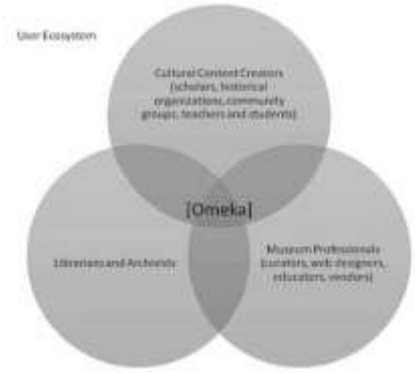
Source: Tom. (2010, September 21). *Omeka—Omeka and Its Peers*. OMEKA

The project Omeka is funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; the Institute of Museum and Library Services, US; the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation; and, the Samuel H. Kress Foundation. The significance of the funding bodies denotes the importance of the project with social concern.

Omeka is designed to address the need of information managers, curators, record managers, documentation specialist, and digital information resource archivists. The key aspect of Omeka is the easy working process and template-based administration for content management and submission. This aspect has addressed the major problem of users who are experts in information management with basic computer skills.

The project presents the pictorial representation of user community as depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2: User community of Omeka



Source: Tom. (2010, September 21). *Omeka—Omeka and Its Peers*. OMEKA.

3. Key features of Omeka:

Some of the key features which made one of the authors to consider Omeka for the digital information resources are listed below. These features were evaluated with a definite weight against its counter parts – DSpace, EPrints, Greenstone, Invenio, and ORI-OAI, in the Open-Source arena. Later, to identify any other value-added feature for the projects, Omeka was compared with its commercial counter parts - Mnesys, DigiTool, Yoolib, CONTENTdm.

[Special Note: Since the data and analysis of the evaluative study is submitted to an Journal, the authors are not including the data, interpretation and analysis in this paper]

4. Features identified for Evaluation:

The evaluation criteria is grouped into 5 categories – Software and Architecture, Designing Components, Data Migration, Cataloguing Standards, and, Interoperability. The criteria under each of the categories are listed below:

5. Software and Architecture:

- Availability of Software under GNU General Public License as Open-Source Software (as institute of one of the author of this paper has adopted OSS for automation, digital library, institutional repository, eLearning and Website, this feature had greater weightage)
- Ability to accommodate the key requirements - different Web Content Management, Collections Management, and Archival Digital Collections Systems in an integrated environment (an integrated tool should support – digital library, archiving, content management and eLearning resource sharing on a common platform)
- Documentation pertaining to installation, customization, content development, administration, and service support should be accessible through project webpage.
- The administration and content development should not demand higher end IT skills from the project personnel (not more than the usual computer skills expected to possess among library managers).
- Should be platform (Windows & Linux) and device (Computer, Mobile, Tab, etc.) independent.
- The software should have considerably good user community on discussion forums, discussion lists, and in social media platforms.
- Ability to handle all type of files, including but not limited to images, video, audio, multi-page documents, PDFs, PPT, et.al.
- Should support Unicode and display the characters and symbols properly on any browsers.

6. Designing Components:

- Adherence to Section 508 compliance in Web Designing and Best Practices

- Adherence to applicable standards and best practices in the templates / designed themes of the project
- Allow easy modification (or) rearrangement of components in designed themes or templates.
- Allow opportunity to customize the designed themes with access to API Support and Documentation

7. Data Migration:

- Adherence to data migration standards and support tools such as OAI-PMH, CSV, EAD, Z39.50, and Zotero importer plugins.
- Ability to migrate data either individually (or) in batch mode.

8. Cataloguing Standards:

- Obeying Dublin Core Metadata Standard (considered as core because of its recognition and wider acceptance internationally).
- Ability to re-use of Metadata in multiple exhibits in design and presentation of search results.

9. Interoperability:

- Ability to integrate and share data among different content management systems.
- Ability to share data on variety feeds, which has international acceptability (Such as, Atom, DCMES-XML, JSON, RSS2, CSV, EAD, Zotero, etc.)

Omeka has performed at satisfactory point in the 5-point Likert scale. The performance of Omeka has given confidence to create testbed. The authors like to share link for the detailed features which is made available in the project site at http://omeka.org/files/docs/Featurelist.pdf. The other add-on features helped the authors to consider Omeka for archiving and managing the documents, records, and resources of the institute.

The authors like to emphasis and reiterate the findings of the study by Dutta and Mukhopadhyay (Dutta & Mukhopadhyay, 2022) which states 'Omeka provides many benefits for different types of digital library collection exhibits and different levels of technical expertise but is currently limited in the ability to manage multiple exhibits of separate digital collections'.

10. Selected Case Studies of OMEKA in GLAM

National Archaeological Museum (Spain) Case Study: Omeka was employed for the dissemination of the libraries of the University of Seville, emphasizing virtual exhibitions. This demonstrates its contribution to cultural heritage preservation. Omeka played a pivotal role in disseminating the libraries of the University of Seville, with a focus on virtual exhibitions at the National Archaeological Museum in Spain. This underscores its significance in contributing to the preservation of cultural heritage. The use of Omeka for virtual exhibitions aligns with broader trends in digital heritage management in museums, emphasizing accessibility and visibility. Such applications, as seen in the case study, reflect the evolving landscape of special libraries as vital information and documentation centers for universities and cultural institutions. This case study contributes to the broader discourse on leveraging technology for the maintenance and preservation of cultural artifacts within a museum context (Cobo-Serrano et al., 2022).

11. Indiana University Libraries: A case study highlights the use of Omeka by Indiana University Libraries for online exhibits of digital collections. This demonstrates Omeka's practical application in showcasing library collections online. Indiana University Libraries effectively utilize Omeka for online exhibits of digital collections. Omeka, as showcased in the case study, proves practical for presenting library collections online. This implementation is part of Indiana University's broader

commitment to digital collections, offering access to descriptions, finding aids, and guides. The online gallery, an extension of the Scholars' Commons Exhibit Space, hosts born-digital exhibits, exemplifying the Libraries' dedication to digital curation. Omeka's significance is further emphasized as a crucial tool for digital object collections, contributing to cultural heritage projects at Indiana University. This case study exemplifies Omeka's adaptability and effectiveness in enhancing online accessibility and visibility of library collections (Hardesty, 2014) .

12. University Archives Connection: Omeka has been employed by libraries, including XULA (Xavier University of Louisiana), to connect students to university archives. This use case highlights the user-friendly environment provided by Omeka for sharing digitized collections on the web (Siddell, 2018).

13. McMaster University's Digital Exhibits: McMaster University's library services utilize Omeka for digital exhibits, emphasizing its role as a free, flexible, and open-source web-publishing platform for the display of archival and scholarly collections. Employed by libraries and educational institutions, Omeka provides a user-friendly platform for sharing digitized collections online. This use case highlights Omeka's suitability for librarians aiming to complement online catalogs or showcase special collections through digital archives and exhibits. The information underscores Omeka's role in facilitating seamless access to archival materials for students, aligning with its reputation for user-friendly digitization solutions (Depko, 2021).

14. OMEKA for Institutional Repositories

Omeka, an open-source web-publishing platform, has been utilized to support institutions in documentation and accreditation processes (Spreadborough et al., 2022). Notably, the Institutional Reports Collection hosted on Omeka includes accreditation reports, self-studies, and other documents generated by a college for documentation purposes. Additionally, there are discussions about using Omeka, specifically Omeka S, for institutional repositories, indicating its potential role in supporting documentation and archiving for accreditation purposes (Rosen et al., 2021). Furthermore, a LinkedIn post highlights the use of Omeka as an institutional repository with the option to harvest OAI-PMH datasets, empowering institutions in creating compelling digital archives for accreditation and documentation needs (Daga et al., 2022).

15. Conclusion:

OMEKA plays a crucial role in GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums) by facilitating the management and presentation of digital collections, adapting to the evolving digital landscape. As digital libraries become integral, OMEKA contributes to quick and efficient access to resources, aligning with the needs of digital natives who seek rapid information retrieval and consumption.

Addressing Converging and Diverging Factors: OMEKA aids in digital preservation, addressing converging and diverging factors in GLAM institutions, ensuring comprehensive strategies for Libraries, Archives, and Museums (LAMs) (Ciurea & Filip, 2022).

Future Skills Requirements: OMEKA aligns with the future skills requirements of information professionals in GLAM, supporting passion-driven approaches for digital natives in Australia and beyond (Morello, 2021).

Historical Significance: Recognizing the historical significance of GLAM institutions, OMEKA contributes to the re-convergence of Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums, acknowledging their role as essential knowledge organizations (Brey, 2021).

This conceptual paper is an effort by the authors to present a case study on Omeka and its importance in institution / organization libraries which perform the role of Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums (GLAM). The key features and software (both in Open Source and Commercial flavour) considered in this case study is shared for the benefit of professional friends. It is obvious that the case

study carried out may be continued further and a much-detailed study may be attempted in exhibiting the digital collections considered in any library as information resources.

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