



## Interim Performance Report for IMLS Grant, LG-24-07-0005-07 *Omeka*, A Free, Open Source, Standards-based, Easy-to-Use, Web Publishing Platform

April 30, 2010

### Executive Summary

The Center for History and New Media (CHNM) has made great strides in disseminating and developing *Omeka* <omeka.org> in the last six months. Since the last report, we released Omeka version 1.2 and launched the hosted service, *Omeka.net* Alpha. Since October, *Omeka* has been downloaded over 2400 times and nearly 250 individuals requested invitations to test *Omeka.net* Alpha. The museum and library world continues to show tremendous interest in using *Omeka* as the number of websites, plugins, and themes built with the software package continues to grow.

### Development and Use

Our most important development for this report is the development and launch of the Omeka.net Alpha, which completes the Omeka grant's last major deliverable. Building Omeka.net from scratch required intense work from the development team who continue to work towards improving the application as we move toward launching a beta in Fall 2010. Our initial group of testers includes 250 individuals represent museum, library, archives, and academic communities. Throughout the coming months we plan to stay in touch with the alpha testers and send them micro-surveys to help us refine the services offered and the user-interface. To ensure for Omeka.net's long-term sustainability, the non-profit Corporation for Digital Scholarship (CDS) <http://digitalscholar.org>, will become responsible for further development and implementation of improvements in the application. CDS is a non-profit corporation organized to provide business and technology services to free and open-source research and education software projects.

The development team continues to work on the downloadable *Omeka* version, and we released *Omeka* 1.2 that includes new configurable themes, a handful of new plugins, and bug fixes for the software.

As the development team continues to strengthen the core's functionality and build out *Omeka.net*, the outreach team continues to reach out to developer and end user communities. Recent activity on the developers' Google group has produced new plugins for testing based on the community's needs, as developers at different institutions work together to solve problems and share code. The group has grown to over 175 members who are posting dozens of times each day.

To increase publicity for *Omeka* in both developer and end user communities, we experimented in February by calling it, “*Omeka* Outreach Month.” We increased *Omeka*’s visibility on Twitter, published additional blog posts, and released additional plugins. During February, we also organized a “Plugin Rush” to encourage developers new to *Omeka* to build a plugin from a pre-determined list. As a result, we have community developers building four new plugins. We continue to host regular IRC channel <irc.freenode.net/#omeka> chats on Friday afternoons when the *Omeka* team is available for live support.

Since the last report, we have developed a close relationship with the University of Virginia’s Scholars’ Lab, as their NEH and IMLS funded Neatline Project is now built in *Omeka* (<http://www.neatline.org/>). Their team members have become very active *Omeka* developers and are contributing a timeline builder and EAD importer plugins.

Sustained interest in using and learning more about *Omeka* is evident an increased number of downloads—over 2400—and increased site visitation—over 134,000 visits—in the past six months. Since announcing the availability of alpha invitations, *Omeka.net* has been visited over 500 times with nearly half of visitors requesting alpha accounts. Interest has remained strong because the *Omeka* team maintains a visible presence at museum, library, and digital humanities conferences and meetings, and through social networking sites such as Twitter.

Since our last report, we have seen an additional 25 *Omeka* sites launch. Conversations about using and developing with *Omeka*—both in and outside the United States—are circulating on Twitter and in the blogosphere, as libraries, museums, and historical societies work with the software. One prime example is the Smithsonian Institution’s SI 2.0 working group that is building a collaborative, cross-institutional (museums and libraries) *Omeka* online exhibit on the Civil Rights Movement to launch at the end of 2010.

Importantly, recent IMLS National Leadership Grant recipients have consulted with the *Omeka* team after choosing *Omeka* as their content management software. We look forward to charting their progress, and showcasing their sites once launched.

We are also seeing more undergraduate and graduate level classes incorporating *Omeka* as a platform for building digital public history and museum studies-related sites. To encourage using *Omeka* for building capstone projects, we created a separate page in the documentation where professors and teachers can link to their sites and talk about how they teach with *Omeka*.

Examples of *Omeka*-powered sites that have recently launched include the following:

- Creating Holyoke: Voices of Holyoke Community’s Past, Present, and Future, <http://creatingholyoke.org>, Holyoke Public Library History Room and Archive and the Wistariashurst Museum
- Daisy M. Helyar, 1906-1910 Scrapbook, <http://gslis.simmons.edu/daisy/>, Simmons College Archives & Simmons College Digital Libraries class
- Harry Lemen Historic Photo Collection, <http://www.mjcpl.org/photos/>, Madison-Jefferson County Public Library, Madison, Indiana

- Martha Washington, a Life, <http://marthawashington.us>, Mount Vernon and Center for History and New Media
- Ohio Civil War 150, <http://www.ohiocivilwar150.org/omeka/>, Ohio Historical Society, CSU Center for Public History and Digital Humanities, and Ohio Humanities Council
- A Short History of the Seed and Nursery Trade Catalogue in Europe and the U.S., <http://osulibrary.oregonstate.edu/specialcollections/omeka/exhibits/show/seed>, Special Collections, Oregon State University Libraries
- Voices for the Lake, <http://voicesforthelake.org>, ECHO Lake Aquarium and Science Center/Leahy Center for Lake Champlain
- WHS Archive, <http://worthingtonhistoricalsociety.org/omeka>, Worthington Historical Society in Worthington, Massachusetts

## Features and Plugins

Since our last report, we released *Omeka* 1.2 in April and accompanying upgraded plugins and themes; four new plugins from the Omeka team, plus seven near completion built by community developers; and the alpha release of *Omeka.net*. *Omeka* 1.2 included configurable themes, which is a feature available through the new *Omeka.net*. This major change allows users to upload logos, change the color palette, add text to their homepage, and edit the footer and main navigation all through the administrative, web-accessible, panel. In making themes configurable in the admin panel, we hope to continue to make *Omeka* open and friendly to non-programmers. The 1.2 release also contained an improved exhibit builder.

We launched a new Plugin and Theme directory to make finding and downloading addons easier for *Omeka* users. With many new developers building plugins, we can also more easily update this directory to reflect the newest additions from the *Omeka* community.

New plugins include the following:

- Docs Viewer: Embeds a Google document viewer into an item pages for more easily viewing PDFs, PowerPoint presentations, Tiff files, and most Microsoft Office documents.
- Google Translate: Enables the Google Translate service to work in Omeka public themes and on the administrative panel.
- Intense Debate Comments: Adds commenting functionality through the Intense Debate web service.
- Page Caching: Provides basic page caching for Omeka websites, allowing web pages to load faster.

Plugins in Development by Omeka Community:

- Simile Time Line: Allows users to build Simile-based timelines from Omeka items.

- EAD Importer: Imports EAD files and allows users to map the file's fields to Omeka's Dublin Core fields.
- Controlled Vocabulary: Allows users to fill in metadata fields with lists of controlled vocabularies to maintain metadata consistency.
- Feed Importer: Imports Atom entries and RSS items as Omeka items.
- Flickr Photo Importer: Searches Flickr and imports desired Creative Commons photos as items.
- Access Keys: Lets the administrator assign keyboard shortcuts to basic Omeka functionality, such as going to the home page, browse by items, browse by collections, skip to next item, et al.
- Text Zoom: Allows users to enlarge the text on the page and settings are automatically remembered for 30-days.

## Dissemination and Recognition

The project team continues to promote the use of *Omeka* to museum, public history, and library audiences in a variety of ways. We regularly update stakeholders through the project blog, the development Trac Wiki, and social networking sites, including Twitter and Facebook. Twitter has been particularly useful in reaching user-testers and for collecting feedback. Omeka team members also participate in Twitter conversations with individuals as they plan and discuss their *Omeka* projects. The team continues to provide support by answering questions and comments posted to the Forum and on the Google development group email list.

*Omeka* continues to be reviewed and blogged in the cultural heritage and technology communities. *D-Lib* magazine featured a review, "Using Omeka to Build Digital Collections: The METRO Case Study, (<http://www.dlib.org/dlib/march10/kucsma/03kucsma.html>) in its March/April 2010 issue. And the project benefits from positive feedback on personal blogs, such as on *Saucer Full of Metadata*, April 2010 (<http://darylslis.ua.edu/slis/courses/ls566/spring2010/maccall/01/24/wordpress/?p=169>), MacLife blog, *Cory Bohon*, (<http://corybohon.com/2010/03/omeka-plugins-and-development/>), and Instructional Technologist Patrick Murray-John's *re-mediation roomy-nation*, (<http://www.patrickgmj.net/node/183>).

The project recently received attention when two *Omeka*-built sites were recognized by national scholarly societies. In March, the American Library Association's Program on America's Libraries for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century awarded *Digital Amherst* with an award for the best use of cutting-edge technology. Also in March, the *Bracero History Archive* received the Excellence in Public History Award by the National Council on Public History.

During the past six months, Co-Directors Sharon Leon and Tom Scheinfeldt have consulted with many museums, libraries, and digital humanities scholars encouraging them to adopt *Omeka*. In addition, Leon demonstrated *Omeka* to a group of graduate students enrolled in George Washington University's Museum Studies and Museum Education program. Scheinfeldt discussed and demonstrated the software for the Smith College archivists (November 2009), the Conscience Un-Conference (December 2009), and at the Digital

University conference (April 2010). He also demonstrated *Omeka.net* at the Museums and the Web Conference (April 2010). Development Team Leader Jeremy Boggs gave presentations at the American Historical Association (January 2010) and at the Virginia Forum (April 2010). Former Development Team Outreach Lead, Dave Lester, and End User Community Lead, Sheila Brennan, were invited to conduct a webinar for OCLCs Research Technical Advances for Innovation in Cultural Heritage Institutions (TAI CHI) Webinar series (December 2009). Brennan and Boggs led a workshop at the National Council on Public History Conference (March 2010), and Brennan gave a presentation at the Organization of American Historians conference (April 2010).

## **Future Features**

The *Omeka* team is currently working towards *Omeka 2.0* and on the development of plugins and themes for that version. CDS will take over the administration of *Omeka.net* and work closely with CHNM to improve the hosted and downloadable versions of *Omeka*. After considering and incorporating the community's alpha feedback, a hosted beta will be released in the fall.

Overall, we continue to be pleased with the progress of the project and the warm reception that

*Omeka* and *Omeka.net* have received within the cultural heritage community, particularly IMLS grant recipients who have adopted *Omeka* as their content management systems. We have high hopes for the coming months, and we would welcome further input from and discussion with the IMLS staff as our work continues. Please feel free to contact either of us at any time, should you wish to visit the Center or to learn more about *Omeka.net*.

Sincerely,

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