Women's History in the Digital World 2013

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Using Archives and Metadata to Uncover Women's Lives: Challenges and Opportunities for Scholarship through Archives and Digital Libraries

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Women’s history + technology

Ideas and challenges from the Student Diaries project at Vassar College Libraries

Joanna DiPasquale, Digital Projects Librarian
Overview

1. The Student Diaries Challenge
2. Technology as bridge to solutions
3. End results and continued challenges
Our connection to HRVH

• CONTENTdm collections
• Newspaper archives
• Collaboration & sharing
Part 1. Some theory and practice, from (my) digital library perspective

THE STUDENT DIARIES CHALLENGE
Student Diaries Project – Frances Bromley, 1875

Handwritten, some typewritten pages
390 pages
Sometimes illegible
Women’s history + digital (library) world

• Goal: present personal, primary source materials to researchers
  – Women as students, researchers, scholars

• Immediate challenges
  – Multi-part objects
  – 19th century documents, handwritten
  – But not enough time to read every page
Critical questions

• What technology choices do we need to make when we create digital projects in libraries?

• What about the practice of history – specifically women’s history – helps make these decisions?

In other words... what do we need “it” to “do”? 
Part 2. Making our projects come to life

TECHNOLOGY AS A BRIDGE
First steps

• Find a good software solution (Quickly)
• Ingest 20,000+ TIFFs and metadata
• Good user interface
• Solve problems, make lives available!
Facets for project and technology

Non-tech that becomes tech*

Non-tech considerations
- Audience
- Discipline

Technical considerations
- Support
- Optimization

Considerations for the digital library...
Non-tech that become tech
(a.k.a. the really interesting part)

• Nature of the objects
• What are user expectations?
  – What will researchers ask these materials?

• Nature of the data and metadata
• How can we help aid discovery?
What we need “it” to “do”

• Fine-grained full-text search
• Date searching and faceting
• Stable URLs
• Provide longevity, opportunity
  – Decouple UI from data
  – MODS records, METS structure, more
Part 3. Solutions and Challenges

SO, WHAT DID WE DO?
Fedora + Islandora

- Flexible, with excellent datastream and preservation management aspects
Search and display
Future

- Visualization
- Data exports
- User participation
- What are other needs?
Thank you!

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