Using Wax for Digital Exhibits

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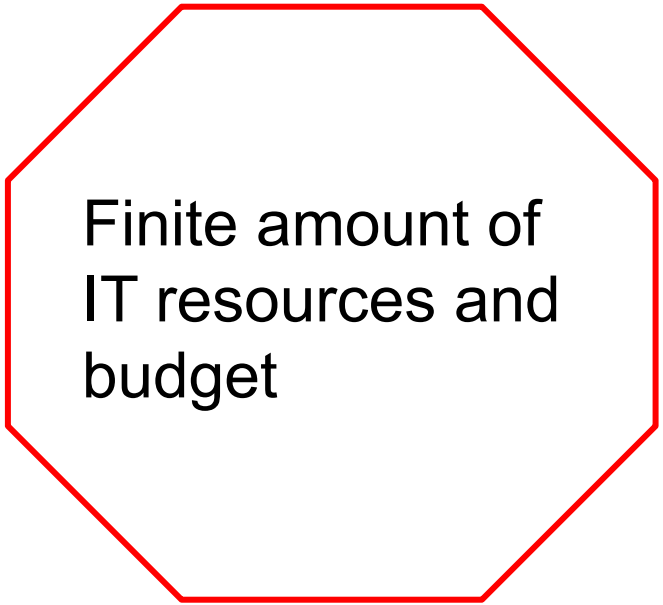
Minimal Computing

- “computing done under some set of significant constraints of hardware, software, education, network capacity, power, or other factors” (http://go-dh.github.io/mincomp/about/)

The Tension



“Minimal Computing in Libraries: An Introduction.” Stewart Vanier.
http://go-dh.github.io/mincomp/thoughts/2017/01/15/mincomp-libraries-intro/

Wordpress

- HTML, CSS, Javascript
- Wordpress
- Plug-ins and themes
- PHP
- MySQL
- Web Server

https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2018/06/wordpress-security-as-a-process/

Static Site Generators

- Use a templating system to quickly generate a static website on your computer and publish to the web
- Avoid hand-writing a lot of HTML
- Fast, secure and low maintenance

  https://learn.cloudcannon.com/jekyll/why-use-a-static-site-generator/

Wax

- Maintained by Marii Nyröp and Alex Gil from Columbia University Libraries
- “An extensible workflow for producing scholarly exhibitions with minimal computing principles.” https://minicomp.github.io/wiki/wax/
- Roughly equivalent to other digital library software like ContentDM or Omeka
- Built on top of Jekyll static site generator

Wax

Provides a set of tools to:

- Process a CSV or JSON file and produce web-friendly metadata
- Create a search index for that metadata (Lunr.js)
- Publish high-quality digital images using the IIIF image standard for digital libraries

Project # 1

- Archer Library - 50th Anniversary Town Hall
- One-time event
- Short timeline to production
- https://ourspace.uregina.ca/Archer50th/

Implementation

- Prior knowledge of Ruby, Jekyll and static site generators was extremely helpful
- Building with correct file paths was tricky
- As advertised: Flexible, speedy and no maintenance required!!!

Project #2

- A set of 2300 historical press releases with OCR full text
- How will it scale?

IIIF static image generation

Original files: 2331 files (size = 1.4 GB)

IIIF Derivatives: 852,551 files (size = 8.0 GB)

Lunr.js search index = 11.5MB

Conclusion

“It’s best suited for folks who are willing to take on some technical responsibility in exchange for a lot of flexibility.”

Benefits

- Speed
- Security
- Longevity
- Low maintenance
- Great teaching tool?

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