Wielding A(rden) Club for IL: The Symbiotic Relationship Between DH and IL Appendix

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Appendix 1: The SMU Arden Club Digital Archive Assignment

Assignment Overview

Metadata: Building the SMU Arden Club Digital Archive
30% of Final Grade

Due

In stages as follows:

1. Basic metadata 3/6 at 2pm
2. Full metadata included researched analytical essay 3/25 by 1pm
3. Final revised version 4/15 by 1pm (uploaded to website –– we’ll learn how to do this in an earlier class session)

Submission

Initially via Canvas as 1 Word document (paste all of the metadata forms into 1 single, long Word document); final version will be uploaded to our website

Objective

We have spent a good deal of time looking at other peoples’ digital humanities projects; now it’s time to make our own. This assignment is a 3-dimensional exposure to the steps involved in making high quality humanities digital data, and sharing that data with the world: you’ll create metadata through (1) archival research; (2) critical research; and then you will (3) use web-editing to share that data with the world, and (4) engage in outreach at a public launch event for the project (4/22) to get a 360-degree experience of creating a digital humanities project.

Instruction Sessions

2/18, 2/20, and 2/22 first introduction to SMU Arden Club materials at the Bywaters Special Collections in the Hamon Arts Library
2/25, 2/27, and 3/1 archival research of your materials to gather basic metadata due to be handed in by 3/6

3/4 and 3/6 introduction to critical research about your Arden Club materials by Rebecca Graff in Fondren Library

3/18, 3/20, and 3/22 in-class research sessions and discussion of SMU Arden Club materials

**How It Works**

On-campus we have a number of special collections in our libraries (lucky!), and for this project, we’ll be working at the Bywaters Special Collection in the Hamon Arts Library with Archivist Emily Grubbs to research a bit of often-overlooked SMU literary history: the amateur dramatics society that fostered major Hollywood stars including Oscar winner Kathy Bates (!), the SMU Arden Club. Our aim is to create the first iteration of a digital archive that will shed light on this part of SMU's literary history and open the door for people interested in conducting research on this topic.

In this assignment, we will learn how to research both in the very traditional archival environment and also in the cutting-edge digital environment. First, we will visit the special collections to look at materials created by and relating to the Arden Club; we will then divide responsibility for researching specific materials, and each person will document basic metadata describing their items. The number of items you describe may vary a little bit as some are very, very long, and some are super short, but I will make sure to be fair across the whole group. I will also provide an example for you to look at as a guide while you do your work. The purpose of this basic metadata is to bring order to the materials within our website: this is how these materials will be linked together and made searchable and analyzable by researchers and visitors to the site, so we’ll be working with a metadata schema that I will provide, and that we can improve upon as we become more familiar with the materials. We will also work collaboratively as a class to make a controlled vocabulary for our tags describing our items. The point of doing this is so that you can take some of the theoretical statements we read about metadata in class and put them into practice in a hands-on exercise to see how they work. Working in an increasingly data-dependent and – driven society, it’s really crucial we acquire an understanding of how our data is constructed, where it’s coming from, and how to make it be of high quality, so the basic metadata part of this project aims to give you a chance to do just that.
The next part of your assignment involves detailed research for the longer description section of your metadata. In this, you will learn how to conduct secondary critical research with Rebecca Graff in Fondren Library to write short essays accompanying the materials that you were documenting. In many cases we have seen digital resources not necessarily providing helpful contextual information –– this is your chance to do just that so that visitors to our site really understand what they are seeing and how it fits into a wider history of SMU, Dallas, and literary and theatrical production.

Finally, when the research is complete, we’ll upload our materials to our website and launch it to the public. You will learn basic web editing, and will also participate in a public showcase of the project to get hands-on experience of the kind of outreach that digital humanities projects facilitate.

Instructions

1. You will sign up to work on a year of the Arden Club between 1916 and 1929. You can either work individually or pair up as you prefer, but do remember if you pair up that you will be expected to cover the same amount of material each as if you worked separately.

2. Each year of the Arden Club has minutes from meetings and programs from performances; you will look to see if there are photographs from your year; and you will also adopt materials from a more general collection of ‘Arden Club Documents’, including things like the Club’s constitution, short informal histories of it, a short play that the Club wrote to welcome freshmen and women in 1954, and notes to cast and crew.

3. In-person in the Bywaters Special Collections, you will research and create basic metadata (as defined in the schema and form for this assignment, provided) about at least 5-7 items within your assigned year and topic groups. You will have access to these materials digitally, too, via Box (I’ll go over how to use it in class if you are not familiar).

4. You will collect your metadata in the Word form provided for the assignment.

5. You will then go on to conduct secondary research for the ‘Notes’ section of the metadata for your items. This could involve any of the following: researching the people involved in the Club, whether in the plays or in the minutes; companies sponsoring productions (if you’re interested in advertising); the plays the Club is putting on and their productions in relation to others; the authors of the plays being staged; faculty members or students involved in the plays; and numerous
other options – we can discuss this to find things that really interest you. You will write a 100-300 word ‘Notes’ section for each of your items. You will also gather at least 1 additional historical item (e.g. a newspaper cutting; a page from SMU’s Rotunda Yearbook) that relates to 1 of your items. You may do more than this, but 1 is the minimum.

6. You will research and write a short essay (either 3-4 pages working individually, or 5-6 working in pairs) about a facet of the Arden Club materials that you have been examining in the archives. Whereas your ‘Notes’ sections elaborate specifically on that item, this essay is designed to give context to visitors to the website about the facet of the Arden Club that you have been researching more broadly. For example, you might write an essay on ‘The Arden Club in 1916’ or ‘The Arden Club in 1925’; you might write an essay on ‘The Changing Sponsors of the Arden Club, 1916-1929’; you might write an essay tracking a particular actor or group of actors through the Club’s productions; you might write an essay about the range of plays the Club is putting on; you might write an essay on the newspaper reviews received by Club productions in a certain timeframe. The options are numerous, and we can discuss in class to make sure you find something that will work and that really interests you.

By the end of the assignment you will have produced:

1. Basic metadata on approximately 5-7 items relating to the Arden Club; 1 item means the whole of something, so if you’re working on a document with 3 pages, that’s still one
2. Advanced metadata including ‘Notes’ on approximately 5-7 items relating to the Arden Club.
3. At least 1 additional historical item relating to at least 1 of your Arden Club items.
4. A short discussion essay about your Arden Club materials.

To count as completing the assignment, you must upload your final materials to the website once they have been approved, and participate in the launch by presenting your work (briefly) 4/22.

Appendix 2: SMU Arden Club Digital Project Metadata Schema
The metadata schema is the document that defines (a) what information you collect about items being put into a digital archive; and (b) precisely how (what format, level of detail, etc.) you collect that data. You should consult this document when completing your metadata forms for your items in the SMU Arden Club archive and follow its standards exactly (your consistency in doing so is a major factor in your grade for this project).

**Metadata Elements and Their Definitions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Title</td>
<td>The name given to the item you are documenting by its creator or publisher; if this is unknown, you will need to create a name for it. A consistent way of creating names is to structure it as follows: ‘Type of item, date’. For example, ‘Minutes, mm/dd/yy’ to describe the minutes of a given day, month, and year. If you are working with a program, you could expand on that to say ‘Program, [name of play], date’ being as specific as you can.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Creator</td>
<td>The person(s) or organization(s) responsible for generating the intellectual content of the item. For example, if you have a script, the playwright created that script; the photographer taking a photo is its creator. HOWEVER, you may often not know this information for Arden Club materials, in which case we have to leave this field blank.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Date</td>
<td>The date when the item was created. You will almost certainly enter this information in a dropdown menu, but for consistency record it as mm/dd/yy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Arden Club Year</td>
<td>The year of the Arden Club’s history which this item relates to. This will be accessible to you in a dropdown menu, so just make a note of it as you go along.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Type</td>
<td>The type of item that you are documenting such as a book or a program; in our case that will be one of the following things from this list: program; script; minutes; photograph;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
membership details; Arden Club statutes; Arden Club history; Arden Club daily operations.

6. Playwright
If your item relates to a particular play, this is the field in which you will record the author of that play. You will need to do that in the following format: surname, first name. e.g. Eliot, Thomas Stearnes.

7. Play
If your item relates to a particular play, this is the field in which you will record the title of that play.

8. People involved
The people from the Arden Club and its community involved in this item; this might be the names of people taking part in a play; it might be people coming to an Arden Club lunch or meeting. This element will not apply to every document, only ones listing individual names. You should record names in this format: surname, first name. If someone works under different names (e.g. Kathy Bates is Kathleen Doyle Bates or Doyle Bates, we’ll settle on one version of their name to use to make sure that this information actually gathers all items about that person into 1 place if someone were to search for them).

9. Organizations involved
The names of organizations sponsoring the event that this item relates to. This element will probably apply only to advertisers within play programs. You should record the names of organizations exactly as you find them in the printed records.

10. Transcription
If your resource is made up of text, you will need to transcribe that text to make it fully searchable. This may be trickier for some types of resource than others, but here is the format: for minutes, transcribe everything; for programs, transcribe the text generated by the Arden Club (i.e. not adverts; rather any kinds of play summaries, lists of actors, directors, etc). When you transcribe something, this just means you type it exactly as it is in the original document.
11. Alternative Text
For any item that is not text-based (e.g. a photograph), you will need to write a very short 1-sentence description of that item which would be heard by someone using this website through adaptive technology (e.g. if they are unable to see). This can be very short, but it should be specific enough to give a good sense of what the image looks like.

12. Notes
This is a 100-300 word piece of research about one of the special features of the item that you are documenting. See the main assignment sheet bullet point no. 5 for full details, but this will involve researching a facet of the item that you find particularly interesting (e.g. a notable person involved; a particular company or group of companies sponsoring a production; something about the play being performed). You will be using secondary sources to do this research, so you need to document those in MLA formatting below your 100-300 word piece.

13. Tags
These are like hashtags being used to indicate the main topics of the item which you are researching. For example, you might have a broad tag of ‘comedy’ or ‘tragedy’ indicating the genre of your item; for a location used in a production (e.g. ‘Dallas Hall’); for a concern of the club (‘membership dues’).

This is where we'll be making a controlled vocabulary. This vocabulary will be available on SMU’s Box folder for our class (you have all been added to this now) and we will add to it collectively so that we are tagging everything the same way.

**Brief example of basic metadata to be collected (fields 1-11):**

This is from the only program surviving to us from 1916:

2. Creator [unknown, leave blank]
3. 12/20/1916
4. 1916
5. Program
6. Theodore de Banville; Arthur Shirley; Anatole France
7. Gringoire; The Man Who Married A Dumb Wife
8. Dye, Lowell M.; Hanson, Ruth; Johnson, Francis; Jackson, James; McCord, Mary; Abbott, Thomas A.; Jackson, James A.; Carter, J. Fleming; McCauley Johnson, Francis; Capers, Goldie; Lemon, McHenry; Sexton, George; Thomas, George; Thomas, Bascom; Ford, Gus; Anderson, John; Hanson, Ruth RoJean; Alexander, Dorothy; Lee, Mary; Dixon, Bruce; Lattimore, Lee; Wardell, Edward.
9. Sol Dreyfus; E. M. Kahn Co.; Volks; Browne and Browne Photographers

Appendix 3: Related Sites

Introduction to Digital Literature: A Guide to Research,  
http://guides.smu.edu/engl2318


Southern Methodist University Arden Club collection, 1916-1969 Finding Aid,  
https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/taro/smu/00200/smu-00200.html

SMU Arden Club Website https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/taro/smu/00200/smu-00200.htm