

Digital Exhibitions using Scalar

Alice McGrath | May 2, 2022



Overview

1. Exhibition tools comparison
2. Scalar basics
3. Finding and adding media
4. Layouts and organizing content

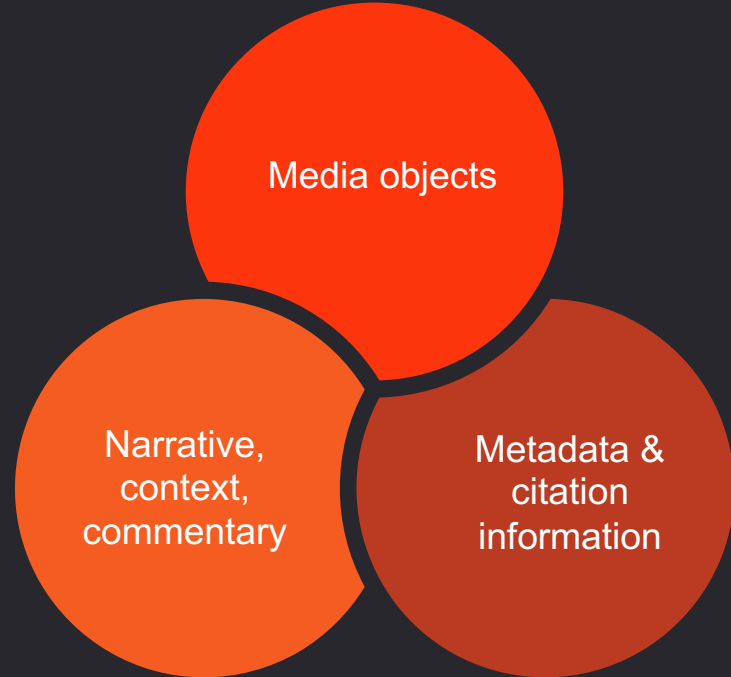


Digital Exhibition Tools



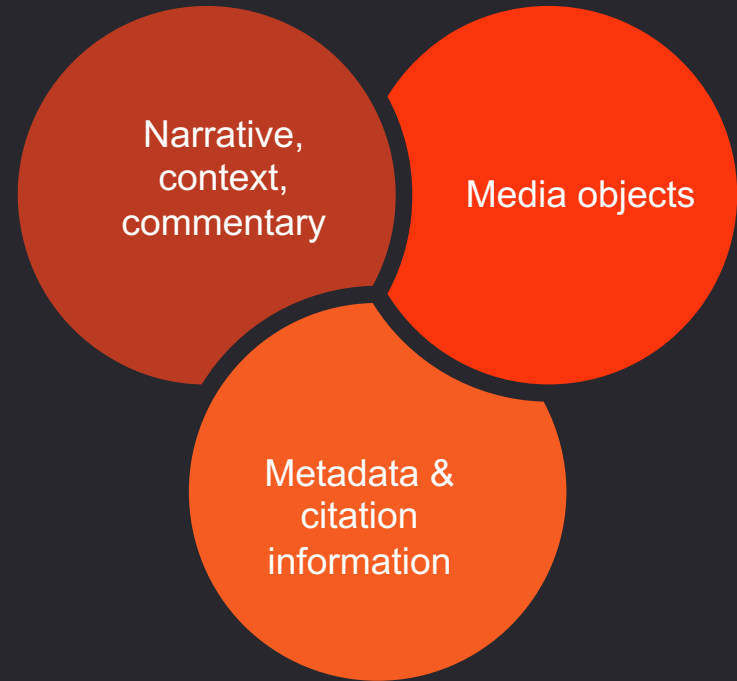
Why create a digital exhibition?

- Publishing or curating a collection of materials
- Web presence for a physical exhibition
- Open educational resources



Why create a digital exhibition?

- Multi-modal student research assignments
- Media-rich digital book or thesis project
- Multilinear storytelling
- Juxtaposing primary sources/cultural objects with criticism



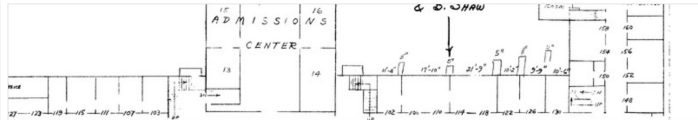


BLACK LIBERATION 1969 ARCHIVE

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ABOUT

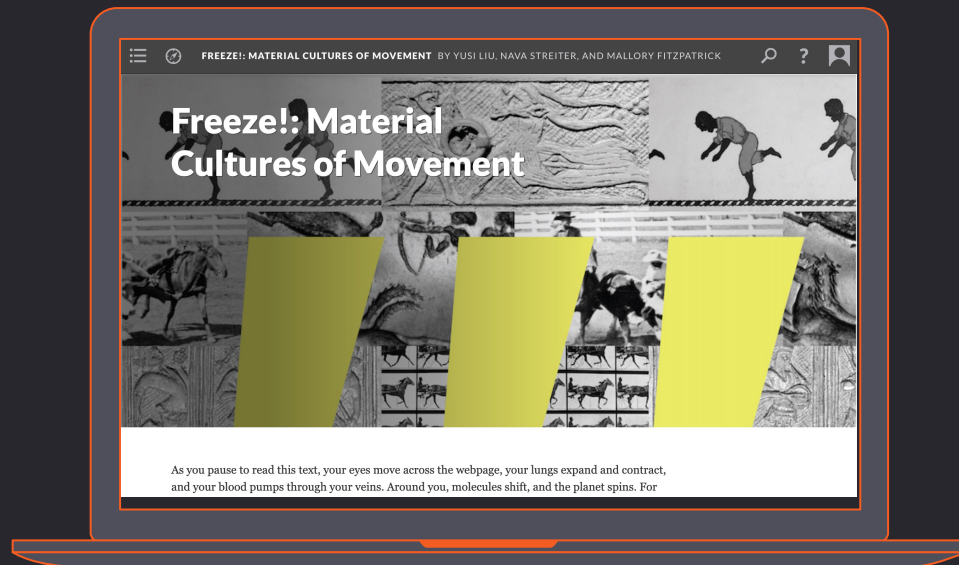


Black Liberation Archive (Swarthmore College)

Omeka Classic & Omeka S

Content management system created for libraries and digital scholarship exhibition projects. Available through Domain of One's Own.

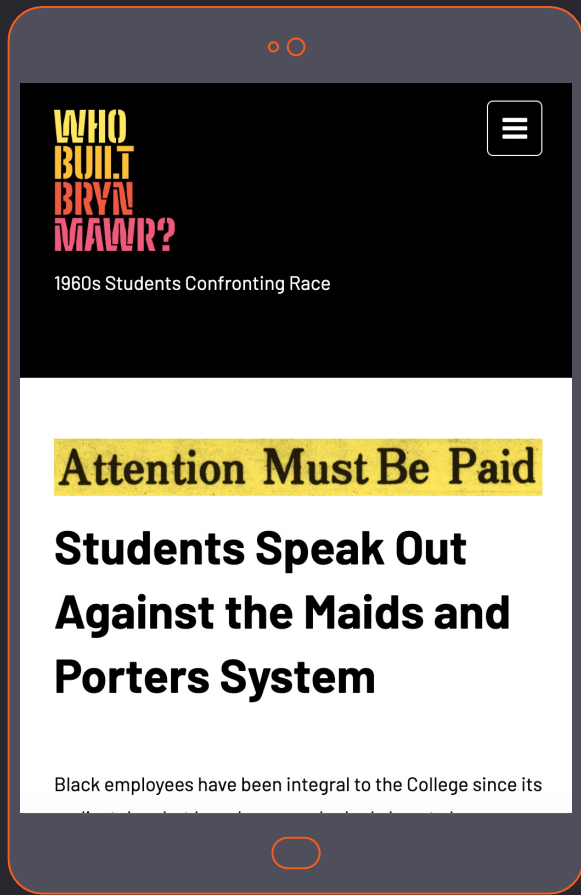




Scalar

Designed for media-rich books and multi-linear digital narratives; featuring commentary alongside primary sources. Available through Domain of One's Own.

Freeze! Exhibition site for grad symposium '22



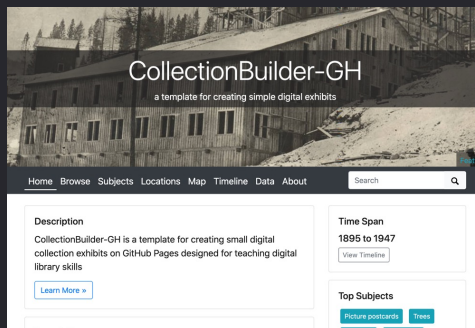
WordPress

Versatile website builder initially developed for blogs.

Available through Domain of One's Own

Static website builders for digital editions

CollectionBuilder



Wax



Jekyll

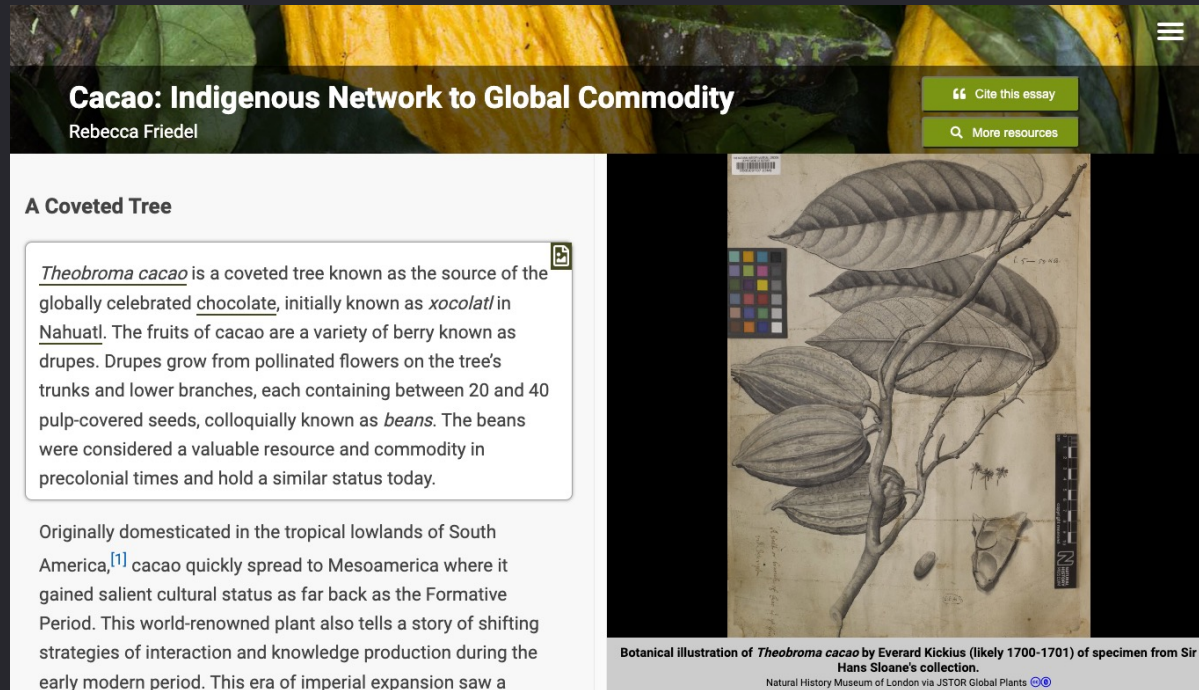


Digital Exhibition Tools

Platforms	Pros	Cons	Best for
Omeka & OmekaS	Themes, metadata, search functionality	Customization on back end, interface confusing	Digital collections and simple narratives
Scalar	Metadata support, page templates (timelines, visualizations), annotation support	No 'themes' and harder to customize	Media-rich books and simple exhibitions, student projects
WordPress	Extremely versatile and well-documented, editor is easiest to use	Harder to support metadata & source information	Blogs and basic websites, student projects
Wax, CollectionBuilder	Static sites (more sustainable), customizable metadata templates	No GUI (graphic user interface) – coding knowledge required	Digital exhibitions

Other tools for publishing visual narratives & media discourse

- [StoryMap Js](#) – geographic narratives
- [Timeline Js](#) - time-based narratives
- [Juncture](#) – visual essays & mini-exhibitions
- [ESRI StoryMaps](#) (not open-source) – mapped narratives



Cacao: Indigenous Network to Global Commodity
Rebecca Friedel

[Cite this essay](#)
[More resources](#)

A Coveted Tree

Theobroma cacao is a coveted tree known as the source of the globally celebrated chocolate, initially known as xocolatl in Nahuatl. The fruits of cacao are a variety of berry known as drupes. Drupes grow from pollinated flowers on the tree's trunks and lower branches, each containing between 20 and 40 pulp-covered seeds, colloquially known as *beans*. The beans were considered a valuable resource and commodity in precolonial times and hold a similar status today.

Originally domesticated in the tropical lowlands of South America,^[1] cacao quickly spread to Mesoamerica where it gained salient cultural status as far back as the Formative Period. This world-renowned plant also tells a story of shifting strategies of interaction and knowledge production during the early modern period. This era of imperial expansion saw a

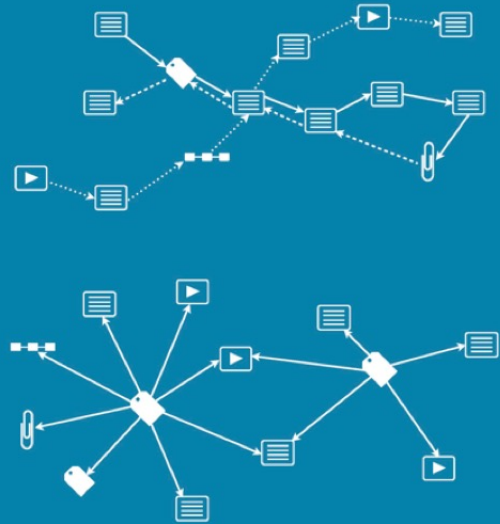
Botanical illustration of *Theobroma cacao* by Everard Kickius (likely 1700-1701) of specimen from Sir Hans Sloane's collection.
Natural History Museum of London via JSTOR Global Plants

Getting to Know Scalar



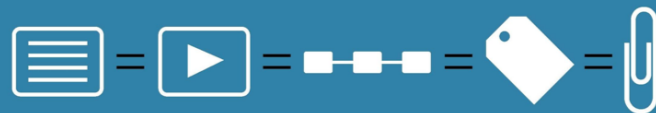
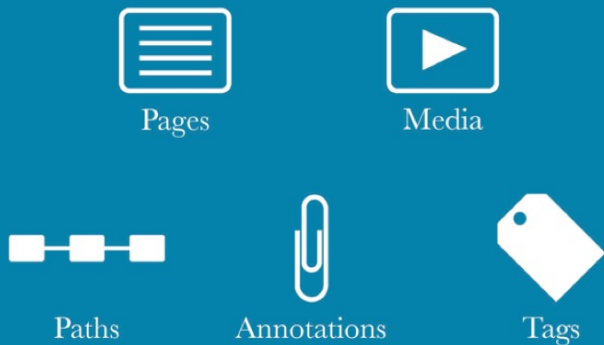
Why Scalar?

- Open-source & available through DoOO
- Simple, no-code interface that enables collaborative authoring
- Embed and import media (rather than uploading)
- Media metadata & annotation features
- Cool options for assembling content: maps, timelines, visualizations & networks



Scalar's “flat ontology”

Anatomy of a Scalar Book



Diagrams by Erik Loyer, courtesy of Scalar team.

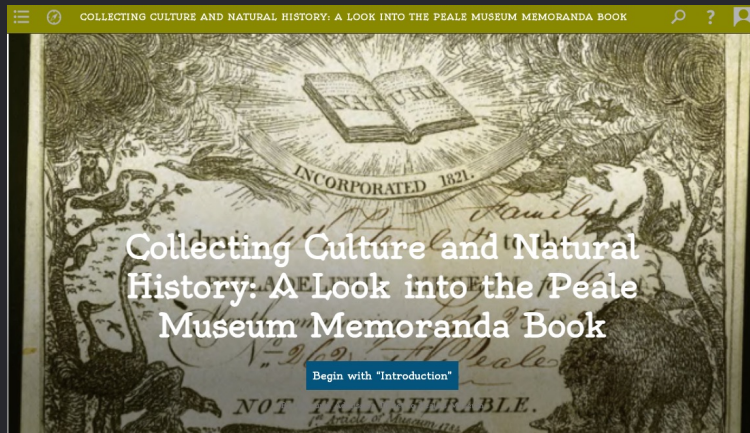
Examples of Scalar Projects

Digital Paxton: Digital Collection, Critical Edition, and Teaching Platform,
Historical Society of
Pennsylvania and Library
Company of Philadelphia.



Examples of Scalar Projects

Collecting Culture and Natural History Sean Keenan (BMC '20)



Crime or Punishment José Vergara & RUSS B237 (Fall 2021)



Installing Scalar on Domain of One's Own

1. Sign up for Domain of One's Own
2. Sign in to Domain of One's Own
3. Find the **Installatron** from your Dashboard
4. Select **Scalar**
5. Install in a **Subdirectory**

See also: Scalar Tech Doc: <https://techdocs.blogs.brynmawr.edu/7301>

Creating a new Scalar book

- Log in to your Scalar instance
- Navigate to “Dashboard”
- My account → Create new book
- The title will appear under “My books”—use the link to navigate to the home page of your project
- The pencil icon will allow you to edit the current page

Alice T McGrath [Sign out](#)
[Dashboard](#) | [Index](#) | [Guide](#)



The Scalar navigation menu



User-created table of contents
and index of project content



Links to Scalar documentation,
recently viewed pages



Add a new page



Edit current page



Import media



Delete page



Access dashboard



User profile

Adding Media & Metadata



Adding media items



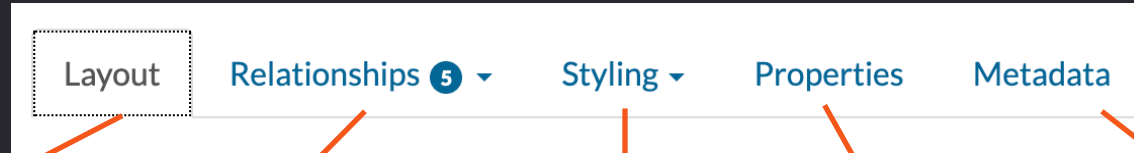
1. Select the Import icon to add media:
 - Using the URL of an image hosted on another website (must end with an image file extension such as .jpg, .png)
 - Using the media importer
 - By uploading an image file
1. Give the media a title and a brief description



Batch importing media

- Download [the sample csv here](#) (it contains metadata from the BMC exhibition [Double Take](#), curated by Carrie Robbins)
- From the dashboard, navigate to the **Utilities** tab (import/export in the old dashboard)
- Select “Import” and then “Paste Text”
- Open the csv and copy several rows, including the header row
- Select “Continue” and follow the prompts
- Once you have imported the media, navigate to your “content” tab and you should see new items in your media library

Media settings



How your item will display – with or without metadata

How this object relates to others (including path, tag, or annotation connections)

Thumbnail: specify an image url for the media item's thumbnail

Visibility (hidden or visible to book viewers) and content type

Add information about what the item is and where it comes from

Scalar metadata fields

Field name	Function	What it should contain
dcterms:source		Site or resource where you found the image
dcterms:date	Timeline visualization*	The object's creation date (specific numerical date)
dcterms:temporal		Associated time period
lptc:byline		The creator of the object or image
dcterms:spatial	Map visualization*	Geographic location associated with the object (geocoordinates)
dcterms:coverage		Geographic area/location
dcterms:license		Rights information for the item (i.e. Creative Commons license)

* The Timeline and Map features require numerical dates and geocoordinates

Using images on the web



- Always be careful about whose content you put on website: only use resources you have the right to use.
- Cite your media! Include attribution of the photographer, the source, and the license information
- Look for material in the public domain or using a Creative Commons license that enables reuse.
- Assume images are in copyright unless they say otherwise

Media Resources

Site	Licensing information
<u>Wikimedia Commons</u>	User contributed media without known copyright
<u>Creative Commons Search</u>	You can search by license type
<u>Unsplash</u> , <u>Pexels</u> , <u>Pixabay</u>	Professional-quality stock photos that are free to use with attribution
Museum and library collections	Institutions such as the <u>Library of Congress</u> , <u>The Met</u> , <u>The Getty</u> , and more have collections of resources in the public domain
Technotes <u>resource list</u>	List of other free resources

Your turn: add media!

1. Batch import the media from Double Take
2. Find 2-3 media items and import them to Scalar
 1. Make sure you have metadata and license to use them
 2. Find the resource's true url (for images: it ends with a file extension)
 3. Import them into Scalar and include a description and some basic metadata
3. To access a list of all your media, navigate to the “Content” or “Media” tab on your dashboard

Creating pages

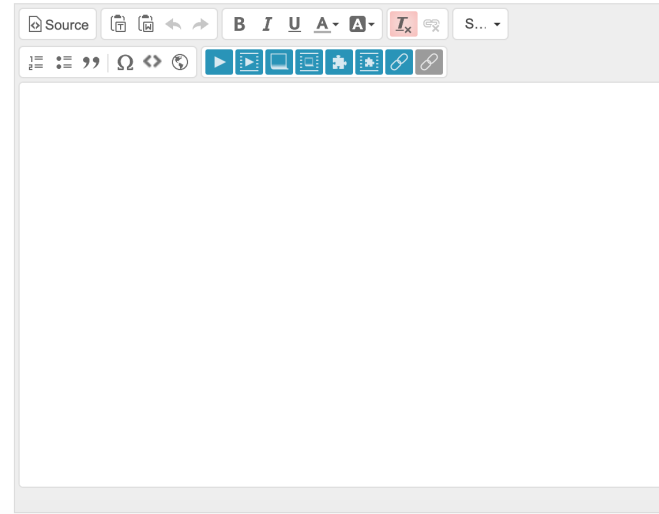
1. Use the New icon to create a page
2. Give it a title and a description
3. Use the WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) editor to draft
4. Use source code mode to troubleshoot formatting



Title

Scalar

Description



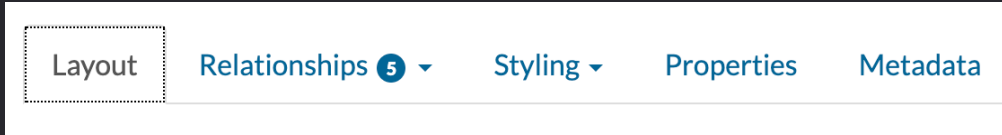
Embedding media in a page



Media link	In-line media link	Scalar note	Widget/inline widget
Creates a thumbnail and caption of relevant media in the margin (attached to text)	Displays media in the body of the text on its own line	A link from text to another scalar page whose text will appear in a pop-up window (designed for footnotes)	Visualization options and layouts for excerpting scalar pages

[See examples here](#)

Customizing pages



- **Layout:** how you want your page to look
- **Relationships:** pages can be paths, annotations, tags
- **Styling:** key images, background images custom css/javascript
- **Properties:** visibility, content type, url
- **Metadata:** data about your page

Page layout options

Visually compelling layouts

- Book splash – designed for a 'cover' image or title page (other content will not display)
- Splash – designed for section headers or the beginning of a path (full-screen image with a navigation button)
- Image header – large splash image with regular page content

The Styling tab allows you to customize the background and key image for the page

Your turn: create pages!

Customize your new book!

1. Create a new page and give it a title and description
2. Add text content (need some text? Try [Lit Ipsum](#))
3. Add some media resources to the page
4. Experiment with layouts, decorative images, and more

Organizing Content



Ways to organize content

Paths – sequential list of pages and items

Tags – non-sequential category of pages

Annotations – text attached to parts of media items

Lenses – these can be public or private

Creating paths

1. Create a new page and add content.
2. Under “Relationships” select “Path”
3. Select all the items (pages, media, annotations, tags, other paths) you want on that path in the order you want them to appear
4. Determine the destination after the path is finished

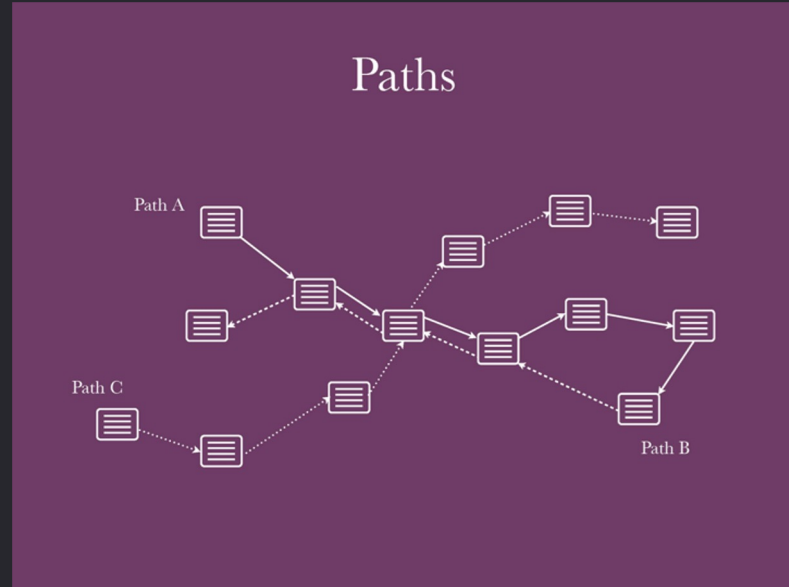


Diagram by Erik Loyer, courtesy of Scalar team.

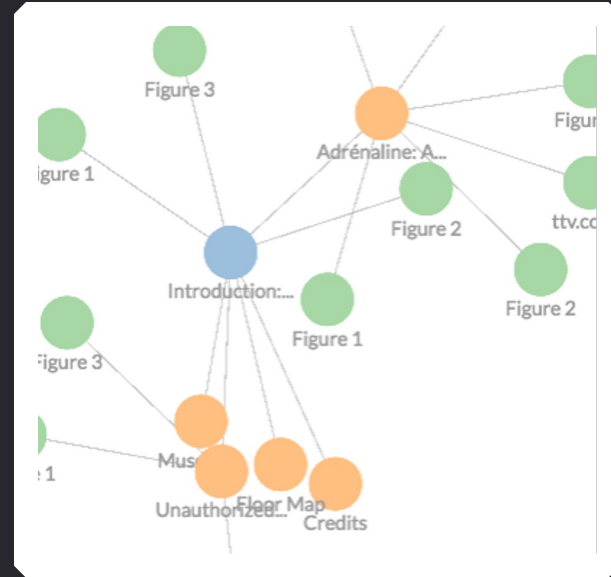
Visual path layout

To create an image-based navigation table [like this example](#)

1. Create a new path and add items to it
2. Select the 'visual path' under layout
3. For each item on the path, add a 'key image' that will display in the visual path

Creating tags

1. Create a new page
2. Select “Tag” under “Relationships”
3. ”To make this page a tag, choose the items that it tags”
4. These items will be listed at the bottom of the 'tag' page in alphabetical order

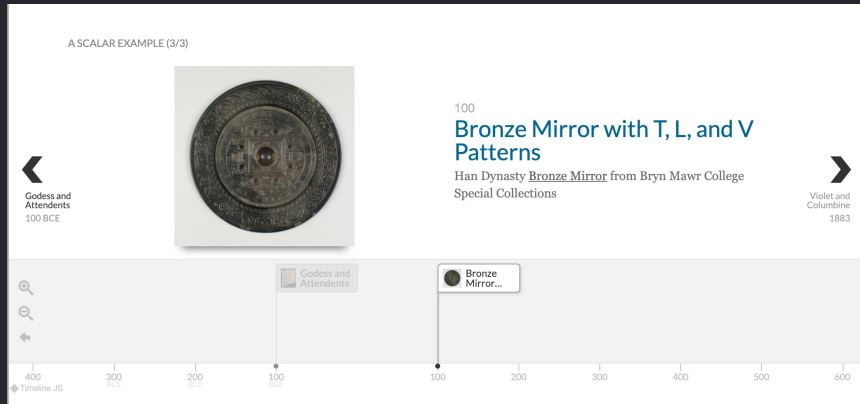


Layouts for tags

Once you make a page a tag, select a layout under **Visualizations**

- **Tag:** creates a network graph of the items tagged by this page (see [tag visualization example](#))
- **Tag cloud:** creates [a word cloud](#) from all tagged items
- **Google map:** [creates a map](#) from geocoordinates in 'dcterms:spatial' (NB: requires google API key)
- **Media gallery:** tagged images are included in [a carousel at the top](#)
- **Structured media gallery:** adds thumbnails of all tagged ([see structured gallery example](#))

Creating a timeline




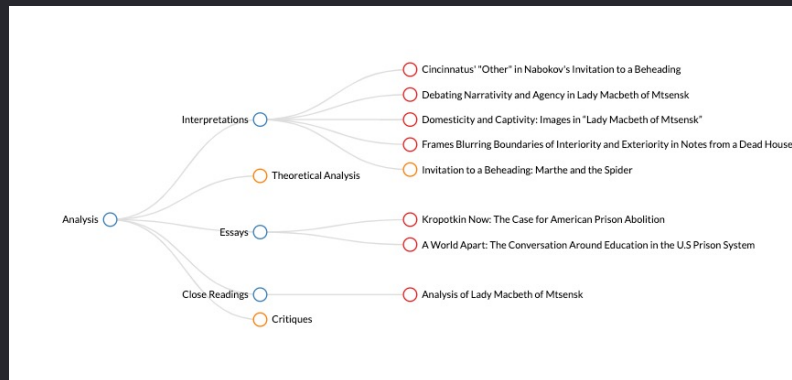
[See example here](#)

1. Create a new page and select “Timeline” for its layout
2. Relationships > choose the items that it tags. Tag any items you’d like to include
3. Make sure each tagged item has temporal metadata: either **dcterms:date** or **dcterms:temporal**


Visualization widgets

Scalar provides many ways of visualizing the materials and connections you've made in your exhibit.

- Create a new page
- Insert a “widget” inline
- Select a visualization type 
- Save and view
- Explore your connections!



Adding an annotation to media

1. Access your media from the 'index' or 'dashboard'
2. Navigate to the file and use the Annotate icon 
3. You can create timed annotations for videos and audio and draw areas to annotate on an image

Example of an annotation page

Your turn: organize your content!

- Create a path page and try out the visual path layout
- Create a tag page and try out the timeline layout
- Experiment with visualization layouts, widgets and annotations

Resources & Tips



Best practices for public-facing research

Copyright

Do not publish copyrighted material—find licensing information for images and media you use and make sure you have permission.

Credit & attribution

Always credit the source of media and data that you use, including museums and libraries holding primary source material, and individual creators if relevant.

Accessibility

Use alternative text, high-contrast fonts, and heading structures to make your content accessible to users with disabilities.

Design & Style

Think about your audience: try to make the presentation eye catching and easy to understand. Information should be organized in a logical manner.

Privacy & Permission

Never publish a person's photo, name, or any personal information without their consent. Make sure all collaborators are represented the way they wish.

Reviewing

Have someone view and interact with your content (preferably on different devices) and build in time to fix any issues.

Digital Exhibition workflow



THANKS!

ANY QUESTIONS?

You can find me at:

amcgrath1@brynmawr.edu



Get help with Scalar

Ask LITS

- Email the helpdesk (help@brynmawr.edu) and your question will get to Alice, Sean, or another colleague who supports Scalar
- Schedule a meeting through the [EAST Calendly](#) page

Scalar Documentation

- [Scalar Guide](#)
- <http://scalar.usc.edu/works/guide2/working-with-media>
- <http://scalar.usc.edu/works/guide2/working-with-content>

Get help with other digital exhibition tools

- Domain of One's Own documentation:
- Omeka Classic:
 - Tech Docs: Installing Omeka on DoOO
 - Omeka user guide
- WordPress
 - Tech Doc; Installing on DoOO
 - WordPress Codex
 - WordPress Essential Training on LinkedIn Learning

Credits

Special thanks to all the people who made and released these awesome resources for free:

- Presentation template by [SlidesCarnival](#)
- Scalar diagrams: Eric Layer for the Scalar team

