You DON’T Need an App for That

Leveraging your digital repository to avoid making web-apps

by

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Web Apps defined (for convenience)

• Web apps are applications designed primarily for use in a web browser to do some task
• Most things are some kind of web app now
• Example: ArchivesSpace
• Example: Omeka
• Example: Trello
What we aren’t talking about?

- Web apps designed for data creation
- Web apps for online exhibits
- Web apps for complex exploration, such as browse by geolocation
What we are talking about?

- Web apps designed specifically for search and discovery of
  - Digitized materials
  - Born-digital materials with rich description
- a.k.a. “searchable databases”
- Where a public Digital Repository exists
Why do searchable DBs exist?

- No other options available
- Large scale or special projects
  - Volunteer or staff cataloging projects
  - Crowdsourced data
  - Long-term digitization projects with descriptive metadata
- Rich metadata
- “Need” for mediated access
Why can web apps be problematic?

- Requires web developers on staff
- Staff turnover
- May be fragile or break easily
- **Maintenance** over time
- Can inter-operability of metadata
Metadata inter-operability

- Most collections are unique with their own unique metadata
- Stand up a special app to leverage that unique metadata for search and discovery
- **Unique Just Like Everything Else**
- **NOT** sustainable long-term
- Unique ≠ Standardized
Example Mapping to Qualified Dublin Core

Title: Caretaker’s House Remodeling

- **Identifier**
- **Title**
- **Date created**
- **Location/Subject**
- **Unique?**
- **Description**
- **Unique?**
- **Unique?**
- **Extent**
Is there another option?

- Do you have a digital repository?
- Do you have well-structured and consistent metadata?
- Can you add oddball items to your schema?
- Can you figure out how your repository searches for content?
Leverage your repository search with custom search page
It doesn’t have to be a perfect replica
It doesn’t have to be a perfect replica
Possibilities

Customized Search Page

Customized filtered table
Pros and Cons of the method

**Pro**
- Simple pages easily loaded into browsers
- Easier to make mobile-friendly
- Can be independent of IT turn-over
- Less likely to break as no database

**Con**
- Knowledge base
  - HTML/CSS
  - Some javascript
- Requires data manipulation skills
- Increased expectations
- Does not work with cool stuff like map integrations or interactivity
How-to: Repository Search

• NEED to reverse engineer search function
• Check the URL bar to see how search is constructed
• Modify search with filters to see how it accretes refinements
Dspsace Search

Base URL
Scope
Search text
Facet/filter nomenclature
Filter term
Homegrown Repository Search

- Base URL
- Search text
- Search type
- Filter/Facet
- Facet constructor
- Facet term
Preservica Search

Base URL: tssi.access.preservica.com/?s=

Search text: texas tribe

Filter/Facet prefix: /dcterms_type/Text

Facet 1: Tape 36 Side 2 Transcription, 65th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, House Floor, 1977-05-10

Facet 2: Type: Legislative records, Text

OVER 5,264,900 RECORDS PRESERVED

In complete archive

Sort by Title

Refine your selection (Top 100 options)

Date:
- 1970s

Type:
- Legislative records
- Text
How-to: Construct your search

• Logically break search into chunks

• Create a web form that handles the chunks individually
  • Concatenate chunks
  • May require javascript if complex

• Iteratively test as you go
How-to: Construct your search
Add a submit button
More Steps: Incorporating Datapoints

If you have a spreadsheet:

- Open in Excel and copy column into its own Sheet
- Use De-dupe function to remove extra items
- Use concat function to create the html string you want.
- Copy and paste into your form
More steps: Incorporating Datapoints

If have raw metadata create an XSL transform to make recreating the page easy

- Compile all metadata with powershell scripts (get-content *.xml | add-content compiled.xml)
- Make a shell tag for the transform to work
Make it pretty
Final Step: Responsive design
Good resources

w3schools.com

Google

stackoverflow
Pitfalls and problems...
Contact me

I am always happy to help

bthomas@tsl.texas.gov (best)
512-475-3374 (not the best)
Cell if you are desperate: ???