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**What's in a name: Usability of digital exhibits, collections, sites, and other 'stuff'**

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**Publication Date**

09-12-2023

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**Citation for this work (American Psychological Association 7th edition)**

Martinez-Montavon, A. M., Harden, M., & Narlock, M. (2021). *What's in a name: Usability of digital exhibits, collections, sites, and other 'stuff'* (Version 1). University of Notre Dame. <https://doi.org/10.7274/r0-w1vb-3315>

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# What's in a name?

Usability of digital exhibits,  
collections, sites, and other 'stuff'

Anna Michelle Martinez-Montavon // Melissa Harden // Mikala Narlock

University of Notre Dame

# Outline

1. Digital 'Stuff' at Hesburgh Libraries
2. Our survey project
3. Initial findings
4. Next steps



# Digital Collections

## Inquisition Collections

The Harley L. McDevitt Inquisition Collection consists of several hundred items, from printed volumes to handwritten manuscripts and images. The project is intended as a resource for students and researchers and thus contains thematic introductory essays to materials and digital facsimiles of documents.

## Manuscripts of the American Civil War

This project includes images and textual transcriptions of many of Special Collections' Civil War manuscript collections. Items thus far scanned and transcribed include one topical collection, one collection of personal diaries, 30 personal letter groups or correspondences (comprising around 450 letters), and three groups of military records.

## Manuscripts of Colonial and Revolutionary America — Bristol County Court Records

The Bristol County Court Records are an accumulation of single-sheet file documents issued by (or directed to) the judiciary of Bristol County in southeastern Massachusetts, mostly during the colonial period.

## Manuscripts of Colonial and Revolutionary America — Swansea Town Records

The banner features a scenic view of Notre Dame's campus with a large, ornate building and a dome in the background under a cloudy sky. The text 'CurateND' is prominently displayed in the center. Below it is a search bar with the placeholder text 'Search CurateND' and a magnifying glass icon. At the bottom, there are four yellow icons representing different types of content: a list, books, a line graph, and a hierarchical tree structure. Each icon is accompanied by a label: 'All Items', 'Articles & Publications', 'Datasets & Related Items', and 'Items by Department'. A yellow button labeled 'Contribute Your Work' is located at the bottom right.

# CurateND



All Items



Articles & Publications



Datasets & Related Items



Items by Department

[Contribute Your Work](#)

# DIGITAL EXHIBITS & COLLECTIONS

## Featured Collections

### Digital Collections

[Search All](#)

### Notre Dame Collections

#### Circular Letters of Rev. Edward Sorin, CSC, 1845 - 1893

Father Sorin's letters as superior at Notre Dame, as head of the Indiana Province of the Congregation of Holy Cross, and as Father General of the Congregation (1868-1893), including images of the original circulars and images of pages from the volume of collected letters. We have also digitized [Father Sorin's personal letters](#).

#### Notre Dame Commencement Programs, 1845 - 2018

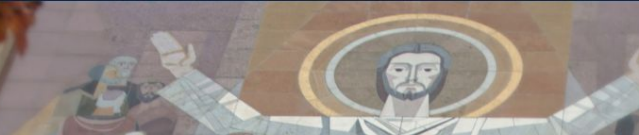
Programs for graduations at the University of Notre Dame. The number of commencements per year varies. The content of programs also varies, but they generally provide information about graduating students, speakers, related events and ceremonies.

#### Notre Dame Annual Catalogues or Bulletins, 1850 - 1914

Notre Dame's catalogues or bulletins included descriptions of courses, programs, curricula, facilities, and faculty. They generally [listed students](#) and provided information on [graduation ceremonies](#), degree

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DIGITAL EXHIBITS



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Research Resources

- › Databases
- › Subjects A-Z
- › Librarians by Subject and Specialty
- › Library Guides
- › Copyright and Fair Use
- › Research Data Services
- › Center for Digital Scholarship
- › Library Research Award

View More Research

Unique Collections

- › Rare Books & Special Collections
- › University Archives
- › Finding Aids for Specialized Collections
- › Medieval Institute Library
- › Digital Exhibits and Collections
- › CurateND

Featured Databases

- › Google Scholar
- › JSTOR
- › Academic Search Complete
- › Scopus
- › Web of Science
- › WorldCat.org

All Items

Articles & Publications

Datasets & Related Items

Items by Department

Contribute Your Work

Notre Dame Annual Catalogues or Bulletins, 1850 - 1914

Notre Dame's catalogues or bulletins included descriptions of courses, programs, curricula, facilities, and faculty. They generally listed students and provided information on graduation ceremonies, degree

# The prompting situation

## Marble

Museum, Archives, Rare Books and  
Libraries Exploration



## DEC

Digital Exhibits and Collections





# ARL Environmental Scan



# What we know already

- Library users don't understand library jargon // natural link language is important.
- Branded names for library platforms are not necessarily helpful.
- Others have tested terminology related to digitized cultural heritage collections (e.g., Burns et al., 2019).
- Words have meanings





# Surveys

# First survey

## What we're testing

- What terms would students use to title groupings of items? (student-supplied terms, open text response fields)

Imagine you accessed the following items via a link on the library website.

### Portrait of a Cardinal and His Patron Saint *Alphonse Legros (French and British, 1837 - 1911)*

ca. 1865

Site Museum of Art

Legros depicts two bearded, half-length figures in a realistic manner. His somber subjects are positioned in front of a flat, forest green background and fill nearly the entire composition. Clad in a scarlet robe and the traditional zucchetto or skullcap, the man on the right is identified as a cardinal. His head is tilted to the left and his eyes gaze in a downwards direction. Beside the cardinal stands a man dressed in a dark brown robe and cowl typically worn by monks. Placed slightly in front of the cardinal, he dominates the composition, occupying around two-thirds of the space. His left hand holds aloft a small crimson prayer book, set off against the green background, while his right hand is crossed over his chest. Some writers have suggested that the figure on the right may be a self-portrait, and the figure in red may be a portrait of the artist's father. The monk's halo may be a later addition by another hand. The work is signed "A. Legros" in the lower right.

written by Emma Lyandres, St. Andrews University, Scotland, 2022.



### William H. Harrison : late president of the United States.

*B. W. Thayer & Co., lithographer*

1841

Rare Books & Special Collections, Hesburgh Libraries, University of Notre Dame

Print shows a large memorial cross labeled "William H. Harrison" at top and showing a bust portrait of Harrison facing slightly right. Two banners hang from the sides, one showing a fountain and the other a tomb, and each contains text related to Harrison. There is a woman standing on the ground, to the right, pointing toward the cross. Included on the cross, below the portrait, are "His last words", "I wish you to understand the true principles of the government. I wish them carried out. I ask nothing more."



# Initial findings

- The vagueness of the questions led to some interesting responses (some oddly specific and some very general)
- Many students wrote in “artifacts” and “historical”

america  
document  
exhibit  
archive  
artwork  
culture  
multimedia  
original  
tangible  
entry  
image  
relics  
19th  
things  
summary  
1800s  
group  
colonial  
description  
century  
media  
cultural  
pieces  
religious  
history  
item  
record  
together  
mixed  
result  
historical  
content  
primary  
artefact  
source  
material  
art  
historical  
artifact

Digital Collections

animal  
collection  
historical  
print  
call  
digital  
archive  
books  
research  
image  
art  
historical  
politics  
project  
group  
famous  
detailed  
multimedia  
equality  
document  
exhibition  
category  
movements  
drawing  
articles  
exhibit  
depict  
original  
points  
poster  
hand  
preview  
periodical  
material  
history  
description  
look  
box  
past  
rhino  
rd  
project  
group  
famous  
detailed  
multimedia  
equality  
document

Digital Exhibits

# Second survey

## Testing specific terms

- Used options generated by our ARL review and first survey
- Asked students about content expectations
- Asked students to choose a link label

- ❖ Digital Collections
- ❖ Digital Exhibits
- ❖ Digital Artifacts
- ❖ Digital Showcase
- ❖ Digital Archive
- ❖ Digital Projects



If I clicked on a link called **Digital Exhibits**, I would expect to see...

*Select all that apply.*

- ☐ Artwork (e.g., Photographs, paintings, sculptures)
- ☐ Ephemera (e.g., Posters, broadsides)
- ☐ E-books
- ☐ Archival or specialized collections (e.g., rare books, manuscripts, diaries, letters)
- ☐ Scholarly journals and articles
- ☐ Item details (e.g., metadata)
- ☐ Explanatory information about the items
- ☐ Historical and social context of the items
- ☐ Interactive features (e.g. dynamic timelines and maps)
- ☐ Related items
- ☐ Datasets and databases
- ☐ Other

Sample survey questions

### Peru's First Newspaper

In colonial Peru, official information traveled by word of mouth and in print. Town criers (pregoneros) announced royal, viceregal, and city council orders in public plazas beginning in the mid-sixteenth century. Broadsides bearing civic and religious decrees adorned public buildings, reinforcing and complementing the oral proclamations.

On January 18, 1744, the *Gazeta de Lima* joined these sanctioned sources of information. Although earlier issues were published, this date marks the beginning of the regular and continuous publication of this first Peruvian newspaper. At once an organ of the viceregal government and an Enlightenment project, the *Gazeta de Lima*'s anonymous editors viewed their publication as an American extension of an established European newspaper tradition.



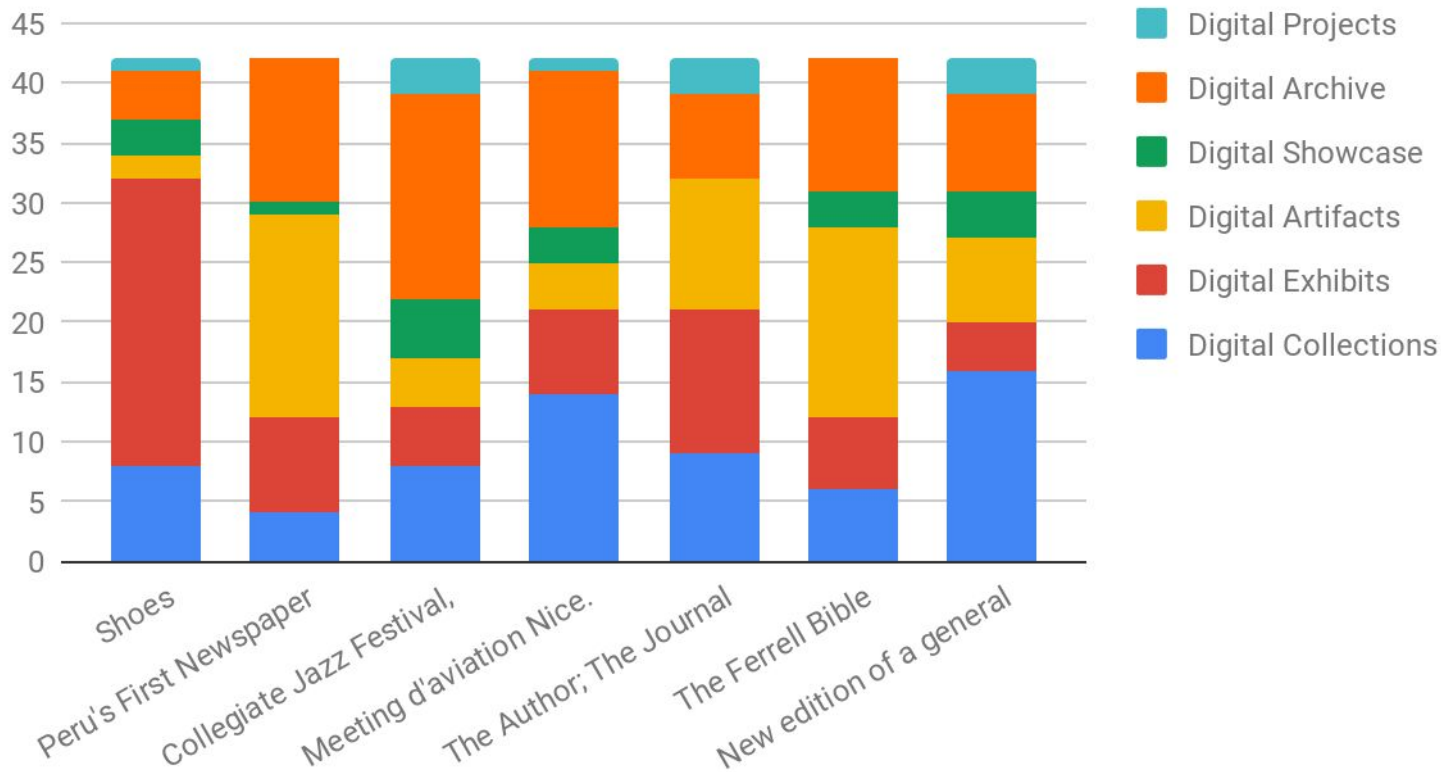
What link would you follow to get to the item above?

- ☐ Digital Collections
- ☐ Digital Exhibits
- ☐ Digital Artifacts
- ☐ Digital Showcase
- ☐ Digital Archive
- ☐ Digital Projects
- ☐ Other

# Initial findings

- No consensus on what words fit what context
- Some trends towards art-like items in Exhibits; broader expectations of types of content in Collections

## What link would you follow to get to the item above?





What now?

# Reflections

- User responses are all over the place, indicating that they don't uniformly understand the meanings of specific terms
- Importance of balancing user responses with librarian/archivist/curator professional knowledge

# Next steps

- Work on contextualizing links
- Future user testing
- Breaking out of dichotomy of collections and exhibits





# Questions?

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