

Sign-up!

After you have a user account: Remember that you are not the only person, nor the only class, using our installation of Omeka. We will be eventually doing collaborative work, so you will be able to see & edit the work of others. Be neighborly and responsible - **do not** delete or tamper with any item, file, collection, or Neatline exhibit that is not yours.

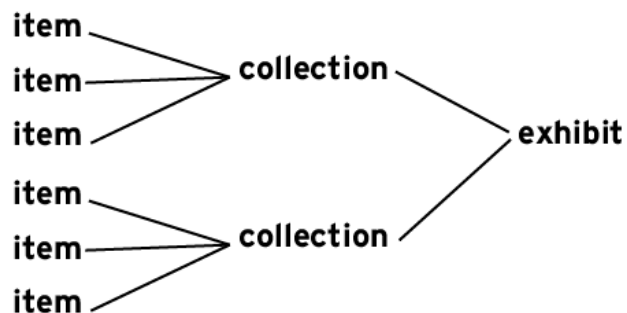
about Omeka & non-linear arguments

Omeka is a Web-based Content Management System designed to help non-technically-trained scholars store digital nodes and curate these to make arguments online. Originally created for librarians and collection curators, Omeka's organizational structure is based on items that get put into collections from which one makes exhibits. In this course we are going to use the "items" as "nodes" for creating non-linear arguments, which we will connect later with a timeline & a map.

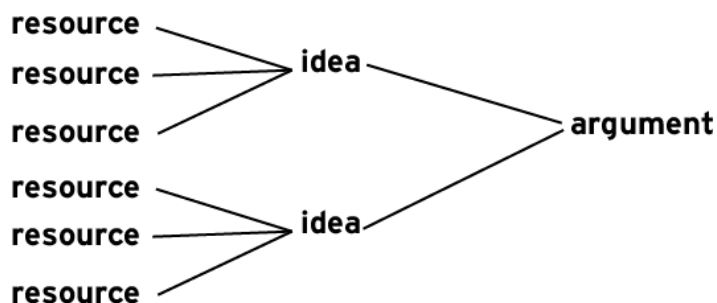
Neatline

If you are creating a Neatline-only project, you will not necessarily need to create items in Omeka. While you can create Omeka items which you will be able to link to in Neatline, you can also create "records" in Neatline alone. You can think of these as existing on the level of "idea" or on the level of "resource" – all depending on how you would like to use them.

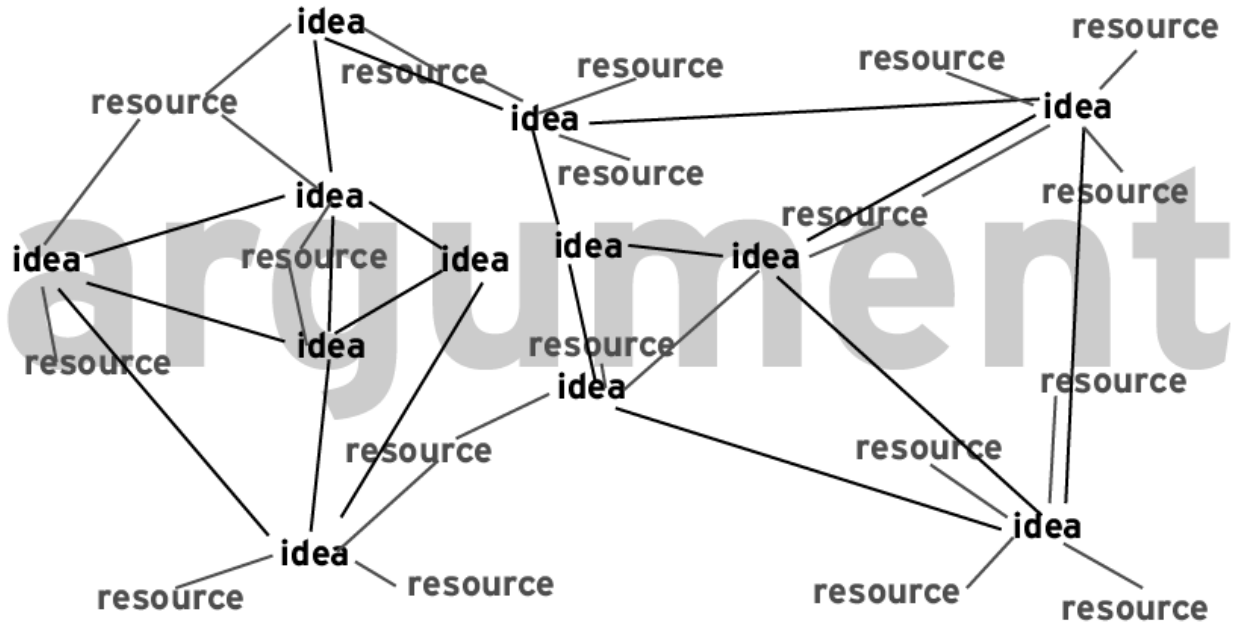
This is how Omeka typically organizes information:



This is more like the way we are going to use it:

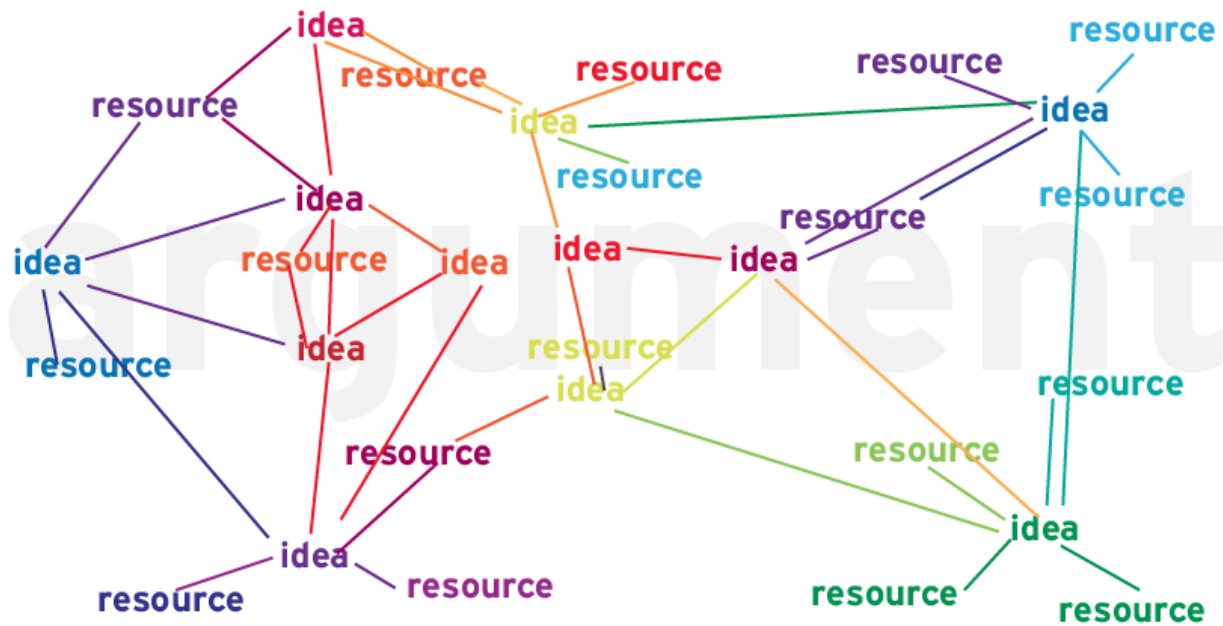


In most essays, articles, & exhibit text, these lines of connection are typically made through text-based connections (linking paragraphs & sentences.) Because we are using the internet, which is unique because of its direct linking ability, we can start to express ideas with a bit more interconnection, which is a bit more true to the way we reason through an argument.



Despite the possibility that this may get us closer to a “truth,” this sort of non-linear argument gets messy. And it can be difficult to know where to start. As students of visual rhetoric (art history), we know that there are many non-textual ways to illustrate connection and organize ideas in the minds of an audience. Some of the resources used as illustrative supplements in traditional textbooks (like maps, timelines, and diagrams) with the help of a CMS like Omeka, can become the main structure of an interactive non-linear argument.

This might make more sense if we take our non-linear argument above & show how different organizational methods can help us make the arguments we seek. The argument is already arranged spatially, so let's add some color organization. When you use color show groupings (for your work, this might be themes, like transportation, labor, patronage, etc), the viewer then gets a better sense of which connections to follow in what order, while still acknowledging that there are many paths.



Adding color made the complexity easier to handle, but its still a lot to handle all at once. For most of the arguments you will make in art history, the resources and the ideas are more relevant in one time span than another. By showing resources & ideas only in the times they pertain to, we add a level of information while decreasing the confusion of what we are presenting at any given time. Maps provide a similar service.

With the CMS Omeka & its plugin, Neatline; points on a map, spans on a timeline, lines, shapes, & points of diagrams can be linked to each other, color-coded, annotated with text, and linked to textually-annotated resources, such as documents, images, sounds, video. Thus, each idea can be organized without losing any of its complexity - you leave it up to the audience to pick which thread they want to follow first.

