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Institution: Broad River University
Collection: Landscapes Abroad

The Institution and the Collection

Broad River University is a private college located in River Forest, Illinois, established in 1925. The admission process is selective, with an average acceptance rate of 35%. The university offers over fifty undergraduate and graduate majors and is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission as well as other accreditors depending on the program. For example, the Master of Library and Information Science (LIS) program is accredited by the American Library Association.

Inspired by the 2015 Paris Agreement, the LIS department decided to start a digital photo collection called Landscapes Abroad. This collection is a commentary on the negative impact of climate change, highlighting the beauty of these natural landscapes from around the world and reminding us how climate change threatens to destroy them. These digital photographs must be original, unpublished works that present natural environments without people. The landscapes that are photographed should be located outside of the United States to bring awareness to how climate change will affect different regions across the globe. Collection policy is to admit twenty-five new photographs annually out of those submitted in an invitation-only photo contest. The collection records are built by catalogers using the Simple Dublin Core, Qualified Dublin Core, and MODS Metadata Schemes. MODS was selected over VRA Core because landscapes do not fit into the visual art category that VRA is designed to catalog.

The Landscapes Abroad Collection user population includes students, educators, and researchers interested in geography, environmental science, history, and photography. Landscapes Abroad also may appeal to users with an interest in international travel.

The Project

We first began by setting up calls on Zoom to discuss laying out the foundation for the project. We then set up a shared Google Drive to store all our XML records, photos, MAP template, and documents of questions and suggestions. For our MAP, we utilized Google Sheets so we could all make changes and collaborative decisions that best fit our theme. We also divided the creation of our elements' content guidelines amongst the group due to time constraints. Aside from choosing to divide work based on project timelines, we allocated the work of formatting our finalized MAP based on the Excel expertise of a team member. While creating our records, we tracked questions in a Google Doc because at any one point, team members were at different stages of record creation, and we wanted to make sure no questions were ignored in the many emails exchanged. Finally, we used Canvas' messaging/email options to communicate general information on our records and the project.

The main challenges we encountered were indexing and mapping MODS elements that we had some trouble understanding. In the case of indexing, the team realized in our first meeting that we did not have a shared understanding of the term. We decided to do more research before making decisions for the MAP, which ultimately led us to ask questions at Dr. Snow's Project Check-in. The conversation there helped us get to a point to make MAP decisions. In our final team Zoom, we discussed what exactly we wanted to be indexed by determining which were the most important elements to the objectives of the collection. As for MODS, it consisted of our group thinking which of the MODS we needed to utilize and what to skip for those that we did not need for our MAP and collection. Using our resources and previous work within the course helped us gain a sense of focus for us to complete our MODS list to begin our records.

For our mapping process, we began with Simple Dublin Core to establish our list of elements. Over the course of our first Zoom meeting, we went through the 15 properties of the Simple Dublin Core Element Set and chose names for the corresponding Local Element, repeating elements where appropriate. With reference to *Metadata for Digital Collections* by Steven Jack Miller, we used existing mappings from Simple Dublin Core to Qualified Dublin Core to adjust those elements for the Qualified Dublin Core properties. We decided together about the obligation, occurrence, and indexing for each element. During our second Zoom meeting, we continued to work collaboratively to map the existing elements to the correct MODS elements and subelements, adding only the MODS-exclusive Record Info to our Local Elements as we went. With our initial Local Elements list and mappings complete, we began to create our XML records.

Because we used a Qualified Dublin Core MAP example as a template for our MAP, once we began creating MODS records, we realized there were some areas of our MAP that required changes to account for the non-Dublin Core scheme and for our own collection needs. Due to the need to coordinate asynchronously, all proposals to change the MAP were made to the team via email, and all changes required everyone's approval before implementation.

Most of the changes we made were additive– we started with 22 elements and ended with 26 – but we did vote to approve some minor element label changes as well. An example: we originally had an element called File Format which was restricted to IMT controlled vocabulary. This constraint kept us from including additional format information.so after following our email proposal and approval process, we renamed that element Internet Media Type, added a File Size element, and added a catch-all Format element with no restricted vocab or encoding scheme. Another example of a change was broadening allowed vocabularies for elements Subject, Native Plant Species, Type of Landscape, and Landmarks beyond LCSH.

From the beginning, our group considered how our collection and our MAP could evolve and be expanded in the future. We often spoke not only about what elements we needed for our photos, but what future contributors may need for different photographs with varying details. We considered how our indexing choices could interact with potential future aggregators; while we didn't need to index our collection name since all our records would have the same collection, we discussed how a future institution that gathered our data to include in a larger database may choose to index that field themselves. Thinking about our collection growing and expanding into the "real world" was a fun way to consider how our MAP would guide the future of our collection.

Photographs from Collection

LA_20250001: Rolling green hills beneath a cloudy blue sky, viewed from a brick balcony topped with a trellis with vines climbing up the corner post (right)

LA_20250002: View of tree and fern covered hills from the Garden of the Sleeping Giant in Nadi, Fiji. (left)

LA_20250003: View from Kehlsteinhaus/Eagle's Nest at Obersalzberg, Hitler's Retreat (left)

LA_20250004: View of the beach taken in Cancun, Mexico (right)