Omeka Quick-Start Guide

Omeka Vocabulary

Item
The basic unit of an Omeka site. An item can be anything: a photograph, a work of art, a person, an idea. You'll describe each item, and you can upload files to represent it, too. You'll build your Omeka site by assembling items.

Collection
A set of items that you've grouped together. Your Omeka site can have multiple collections, but an individual item can only belong to one collection at a time.

Exhibit
A thematic tour of your items. Each exhibit has **sections** and **pages**. You might think of these as akin to book chapters and book pages. A section is a group of pages, and a page is a group of items (along with descriptions). You can have multiple exhibits, and items can belong to multiple exhibits.

Dublin Core
"Dublin Core" is the name for a kind of metadata. Metadata is sort of what it sounds like; that is, information about information. You'll use metadata to describe attributes of your items, like their sizes, dates of creation, etc. In order to keep these descriptions consistent, information professionals have defined various metadata standards. Dublin Core is the name of the standard that Omeka uses.

Item Type
An item, as we learned, can be many different things, like a photograph, a website, a book, or a person. An "item type" is just the kind of thing the item is. You can choose from a built-in list of item types, or you can create your own.

Simple Pages
A page on your Omeka site that isn't part of an exhibit or item. For example, you can add an "About" page using Simple Pages.

Omeka.org versus Omeka.net
There are two kinds of Omeka sites. The kind we're using is hosted at omeka.net, meaning that you don't have to install anything. You just sign up for an account using a web form. If you'd like to customize your Omeka site more heavily than Omeka.net allows, you might consider Omeka.org. With an Omeka.org site, you download a free software package and install it on your own server. So Omeka.org sites can be more customized, but you have to be comfortable installing Omeka on a server.

When Might Omeka be the Right Choice?

You have a set of things you want to display on the web.
Omeka is designed to display collections. The content of the collection can be a lot of different things — objects, photographs, people, even ideas — but you should have multiple items that you want to display.

You want to tell stories with objects.
With Omeka, you can create exhibits: narrative walk-throughs of items.

It's important to have complete information about each object.
Omeka excels at metadata; that is, information about the items in your collection. You'll fill out a form to describe the attributes of each item in your collection.

When Might Omeka Not be the Right Choice?

You want a simple website.
If you just want a website with pages, text, images, and other media, Omeka might be more tool than you need. Instead, consider WordPress.

You want a lot of control over the way things look.
Omeka.net sites come with a number of built-in themes, but you can't control every element of your site's appearance. If you want to fine-tune the appearance of your site, consider using Omeka.org and customizing a theme.

You want sophisticated, dynamic queries of your database.
A user can search your Omeka collection, but you can't easily set up the home page so that it, say, always shows the most-viewed spoon in your spoon collection. That is, Omeka doesn't allow you to create custom queries. If this is important to you, consider Drupal.

You want to create very complex paths through your collection.
Omeka exhibits are pretty linear and straightforward. If you find this constraining, you might consider Scalar, which allows you to set up and visualize multiple paths through a database.