Dear Home: The Letters of Anne Whitney
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Abstract

Dear Home: The Letters of Anne Whitney is a crowdsourcing web platform that allows users to transcribe about 500 letters from Anne Whitney. These letters are fragile and written in old cursive handwriting, so they are difficult to read. Since Optical Character Recognition (OCR) cannot decipher them, we hope to engage the Wellesley College community to transcribe these letters to create a community of readers and to unearth another world of knowledge. This transcription project will be launched during Reunion in June 2014.

Application Functionalities

• Log into individual accounts
• Sort and view letters chronologically or by name of correspondent
• Transcribe letters, ie. envelops or content.
• View a timeline or map of Whitney’s life

Technical Implementation

This project is built using an open-source Omeka Framework on a LAMP (Linux, Apache, MySQL, PHP) stack. Information is stored in a MySQL database backend. The middle layer is written in PHP. The web User Interface layer is written in HTML5, CSS3.0, Javascript, JQuery, and Ajax. MediaWiki is used to store transcriptions and create forums for discussions. Multiple plugins are installed to increase the functionality of this application:

• Scripto – ability to transcribe files
• Neatline – framework for creating interactive visual materials, such as maps
• CSVImport – ability to import items via CSV files
• Twitter Bootstrap – framework for the front end

Future Work

• Continue to tweak the UI and functionalities to make the application simple and intuitive.
• Perform user studies to gather feedback about this project

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