Curation at DPLA: Goals, Progress, and Plans for 2017–2018

Digital Public Library of America
Franky Abbott, Curation and Education Strategist, @franky_abbott

DPLAfest 2017 | April 20, 2017
CURATION?

Courtesy of Los Angeles Public Library via California Digital Library.
Goals

• Use of partner content

• Demonstrate unique value of DPLA

• Alternatives to search

• Attract new audiences

• Share best practices
Principles of Curation

• Attention to audience

Quack Cures and Self-Remedies: Patent Medicine

Race to the Moon
Principles of Curation

- Diversity of materials and institutions
Principles of Curation

- Historical representation
Principles of Curation

- Collaboration: external curators

"Katherine Stinson preparing biplane for takeoff," 1908. Courtesy of the Missouri History Museum via the Missouri Hub.

Credits

This exhibition was created as part of the DPLA’s Digital Curation Program by the following students as part of Professor Debbie Rabina’s course "Information Services and Sources" in the School of Information and Library Science at Pratt Institute: Megan DeArmond, Diana Moronta, Laurin Paradise.
Principles of Curation

• Collaboration: strong communication

Courtesy of UC Merced via California Digital Library.
Principles of Curation

- Collaboration: rigorous review

Courtesy of The New York Public Library.
Current curation projects

- Exhibitions
- Primary Source Sets
- Topic Browse

Published curation projects (exhibitions and primary source sets) were responsible for ~40% of pageviews on dp.la in 2016.
Exhibitions

31 exhibitions designed to tell stories with our collective content to a general audience

New exhibition about America in the Age of Empire in May

Curated by hub partners and grad students in LIS and public history

dp.la/exhibitions
Newest exhibition from October 2016

Battle on the Ballot: Political Outsiders in US Presidential Elections

In 2016, a billionaire businessman and the first woman nominated by a major party ran against each other for president of the United States. In very different ways, both candidates approached the presidency as outsiders, reaching beyond the traditional boundaries of US presidential politics. As outsiders, the 2016 candidates are noteworthy, but not unique; indeed, the 2016 race resonates with the legacies of outsiders who have come before. This exhibition explores the rich history of select individuals, parties, events, and movements that have influenced US presidential elections from the outside—outside Washington politics, outside the two-party system, and outside the traditional conception of who can be an American president.

Outsider, in this context, requires a dynamic definition. Featured stories explore candidates who defined themselves as Washington outsiders, such as World War II general Dwight Eisenhower, yet also those who were labeled or treated as outsiders because of their race, gender, or beliefs. In 1964, Republican Senator Margaret Chase Smith was the first woman to run for a major party’s presidential nomination. Twenty years later, civil rights leader Jesse Jackson built the Rainbow Coalition to unite marginalized and minority groups who felt excluded from politics and ran the most successful campaign by an African American candidate up to that point. Reformers whose principles are not represented by major party platforms have found a voice through third-party campaigns, such as that of the anti-slavery Liberty Party of the mid-nineteenth century. Still others have defined presidential candidacies in opposition to perceived outsiders, such as the anti-immigrant Know Nothing Party of the 1850s and the segregationist Dixiecrats in 1948.

These stories share common themes: determination to change the system, put pressure on major parties and force them to adapt, and give voice to new ideas through America’s presidential election process. These forces of change are not always positive; the stories represented here illuminate both the best and worst about America—both its capacity for and resistance to change in the face of its most reactionary and most idealistic impulses. Somewhere in between fall the stories of outsiders strategically navigating a political moment, forging their own political careers, and advancing their own political agendas.

Credits
This exhibition was curated by DPLA staff members Samantha Gibson and Franky Abbott with materials contributed by DPLA Hubs.

Citation
Example Exhibition

Battle on the Ballot: Political Outsiders in US Presidential Elections

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Battle on the Ballot: Political Outsiders in US Presidential Elections
The Know Nothing Party, 1856

Formed in the early 1840s and popular through the 1850s, the Know Nothing movement was a reaction to the influx of German and Irish immigrants to the United States. Proponents saw these newcomers as a “foreign invasion” that threatened to influence politics and religion. They advocated to curb immigration and naturalization and played on white native-born fears about outsiders. More extreme members of the movement claimed that new Catholic immigrants would help subjugate America under the authority of the Pope. The movement organized in various social clubs and political forums across the country and created propaganda to draw adherents to their cause.

The Know Nothing Party, otherwise known as the American Party and the Native American Party, functioned as the political arm of the movement. By 1856, it had gained enough momentum to launch a bid for the presidency on a singularly focused platform—shutting down immigration to the United States and containing and marginalizing Catholicism. Former president Millard Fillmore ran as their candidate for a non-consecutive second term. Although not previously a nativist, he saw the Know Nothings as the only viable option for national unity in the face of the dissolution of the Whig Party and the ongoing struggle between other parties on the issue of slavery. Fillmore won only eight electoral votes but achieved 21% of the popular vote. Many 1856 Know Nothing adherents also voted in support of the fledgling Republican Party, which had started to court this demographic by campaigning around anti-Popery and bans on immigration.
Exhibition challenges

Constraints of our Omeka instance

Challenges of audience

Pathways for external collaboration

Long form

Courtesy of The New York Public Library.
Value of Primary Sources

Context, context, context!

Support for inquiry-based instruction

Material for digital storytelling, DBQs, timelines, and other research projects
What are the DPLA Primary Source Sets?

- **Topic-based “highlight reels”**
  Topical collections of primary source images, documents and text excerpts, audio/video clips, and more

- **For Middle School through Higher Ed**
  Designed to be used in grades 6-12 and early years of higher education to add richness to units of study and opportunities for students to consider primary sources

- **By Teachers, For Teachers & Students**
  Created by secondary and collegiate educators who comprise the DPLA’s Education Advisory Committee

- **100 interdisciplinary topics**
  Currently 100 topics in US history, American literature, World History, History of Science & Technology, and Art History
Exploring the Primary Source Sets

Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) Primary Source Sets are designed to help students develop critical thinking skills by exploring topics in history, literature, and culture through primary sources. Drawing online materials from libraries, archives, and museums across the United States, the sets use letters, photographs, posters, oral histories, video clips, sheet music, and more. Each set includes a topic overview, ten to fifteen primary sources, links to related resources, and a teaching guide. These sets were created and reviewed by the teachers on the DPLA's Education Advisory Committee. Read about our education projects, suggest a new topic for a primary source set, and contact us with feedback at education@dp.la.
Finding the right DPLA Primary Source Set

Filter Primary Source Sets by:

Subjects, such as:
- US History, American Literature, World History
- Migration, Women, Native Americans, Science and Technology

Time Period, such as:
- Civil War and Reconstruction
- Great Depression and World War II

Courtesy of Atlanta History Center via Digital Library of Georgia
The Underground Railroad (1850-1860) was an intricate network of people, safe places, and communities that were connected by land, rail, and maritime routes. It was developed by abolitionists and slaves as a means of escaping the harsh conditions in which African Americans were forced to live, and ultimately to assist them in gaining their freedom. Although securing one's freedom was challenging, many enslaved persons escaped to free states in the North and to Canada. Free African Americans, however, faced the threat of being returned to a slaveholder as a result of the The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which required that all escaped enslaved persons be returned, upon capture, to their masters. This primary source set provides teachers and students with resources that reveal the myriad sacrifices enslaved people made in order to gain their freedom, the effects of the Fugitive Slave Law on the lives of free African Americans, and the community that was built among abolitionists and enslaved people.
An 1850 political cartoon, “Effects of the Fugitive Slave Law,” showing four escaped slaves being recaptured by armed white men.

For this source, consider:
- the author’s point of view
- the author’s purpose
- historical context
- audience

Citation information
“Civil War. Effects of the Fugitive Slave Law, Cartoon from Newspaper,” Digital Public Library of America, https://dp.la/item/a6677bab0f3f1e769ab473e1db98a50.

Courtesy of New York State Archives via Empire State Digital Network.
View the description of this item in DPLA
View this item on Empire State Digital Network

More primary sources about The Underground Railroad and the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850
Teaching Guide: Exploring the Underground Railroad and the Fugitive Slave Act

By Lakisha Odlum, New York City Department of Education

This teaching guide helps instructors use a specific primary source set, The Underground Railroad and the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, in the classroom. It offers discussion questions, classroom activities, and primary source analysis tools. It is intended to spark pedagogical creativity by giving a sample approach to the material. Please feel free to share, reuse, and adapt the resources in this guide for your teaching purposes.

Discussion questions

1. Consider The Fugitive Slave Law and its Victims, the political cartoon, the drawing called “Operations of the Fugitive-Slave Law,” and the drawing of a woman leaping. What do these show about the experiences of fugitive slaves? What were the different ways fugitive slaves fought against being sold back into slavery?

2. Harriet Tubman is known for the integral role she played in the Underground Railroad, but there are details about her work that many are unaware of. Based on the biography, explain Harriet Tubman’s role in educating free African Americans. What do we learn about her character based on Frederick Douglass’s letter? What are some details from the text that support the assertion that Tubman was “one of the best and bravest persons on this continent?”

3. After reading the Fugitive Slave Bill, explain what repercussions abolitionists faced if they were caught helping a fugitive slave. Why did abolitionists take such risks? Consider details of abolitionist assistance in Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom, The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom, and A Woman’s Life Work, as well as the evidence of the poster.

Classroom activities

1. Upper Elementary/Middle School: The picture and narrative of Lear Green can be paired with the picture book Henry’s Freedom Box by Ellen Levine, which allows students to examine the Underground Railroad from the perspective of a child. Ask students to create a journal from the perspective of a fugitive slave child, using information from this set and Henry’s Freedom Box. The following questions can help students develop their journal entries: What were some fears children had while trying to escape slavery? What motivated them to remain resilient? What do we learn about the importance of liberty and freedom based on these texts?
Example

An “Uppity Women Unite” button in support of the Equal Rights Amendment.

Citation information


Courtesy of Georgia Capitol Museum via Digital Library of Georgia.

This item is not currently available in the DPLA library.
Example

From Equal Rights Amendment Set:

Examine the button. What does the word “uppity” mean? What does it suggest in the context of the ERA? How were supporters of the ERA changing the connotation of the word “uppity”?

Courtesy of Georgia Capitol Museum via Digital Library of Georgia.
The Black Power Movement of the 1960s and 1970s was a political and social movement whose advocates believed in racial pride, self-sufficiency, and equality for all people of Black and African descent. Credited with first articulating "Black Power" in 1966, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee leader Stokely Carmichael represented a generation of black activists who participated in both Civil Rights and the Black Power movements. By the mid 1960s, many of them no longer saw nonviolent protests as a viable means of combating racism. New organizations, such as the Black Panther Party, the Black Women’s United Front, and the Nation of Islam, developed new cultural, political, and economic programs and grew memberships that reflected this shift. Desegregation was insufficient—only through the deconstruction of white power structures could a space be made for a black political voice to give rise to collective black power. Because of these beliefs, the movement is often represented as violent, anti-white, and anti-law enforcement. This primary source set addresses these representations through artifacts from the era, such as sermons, photographs, drawings, FBI investigations, and political manifestos.
Discussion question #3: Using the Black Panther Party Platform, explain what resources and opportunities the Party members wanted for the African American community.
Primary Source Set challenges

Reliance on educators

Integration with collection

Openness and reusability

Courtesy of The New York Public Library.
## Analytics

### Example Hub Dashboard, January 1, 2017 - March 31, 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
<th>Total Items Viewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Items Viewed on DPLA Item Pages</td>
<td>24,873</td>
<td>1.87%</td>
<td>1,332,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Items Viewed in Exhibitions</td>
<td>15,713</td>
<td>1.18%</td>
<td>1,332,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Items Viewed in Primary Source Sets</td>
<td>23,997</td>
<td>1.80%</td>
<td>1,332,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Click Throughs</td>
<td>12,403</td>
<td>0.93%</td>
<td>1,332,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>76,986</td>
<td>5.78%</td>
<td>1,332,640</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Future Exhibitions

Continue development in 2017-2018

Work with hubs and student curators

Rolling publication ~3 per year

Courtesy of the University of Virginia Library.
Future Primary Source Sets

60 new sets by Dec 2018

New EAC members

Anyone can suggest new topics

Professional Development for classroom implementation

Courtesy of the University of Virginia Library.
Website redesign

A Wealth of Knowledge
explore 15,803,632 items from libraries, archives, and museums

Apps
The DPLA is a platform. Developers make apps that use the library's data in many different ways. Here are just a few.  App Library »

News
Join the DPLA Community Reps! Application for 5th Class
Now Open
Mar 28

Announcing the DPLAfest: 2017 Travel Award Recipients
Mar 21

@dpla on Twitter
Browsing

Hunters vs. gatherers

Allow users to get a sense of DPLA content through examples and suggestions organized by genre and topic

Network items and collections together
Other future work

metadata review and feedback for hubs

open (public domain) ebooks collection

Selecting newspaper content

continuing work sharing content on social media
Work with hubs and contributors

Curate exhibitions

Share collection highlights or new additions with us

Share your curation/education experiences with us

Connect us to other institutions in your network doing curation

Courtesy of Temple University via PA Digital.
Questions?

I’d love to chat more about our work and your work!

Franky Abbott
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Courtesy of Archives of American Art via Smithsonian.