



The American Archivist Reviews

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Bamboo Dirt

<http://dirt.projectbamboo.org/> Accessed April 13, 2014

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Digital scholarship has become a buzz word in academia and libraries, and among scholars around the world. Everybody wants to do it but does not always know where to start. The plethora of digital tools available and the lack of technological resources do not make it any easier. Determining what tools to use or even knowing what is available for specific tasks can be a daunting challenge. Now there is *Bamboo Dirt*, a registry of technology tools for those interested and involved in digital scholarship.

This digital scholarship resource is an outgrowth of Lisa Spiro's DiRT (Digital Research Tools) wiki and now receives support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. An advisory board, including individuals with many years of varying experience with digital projects, oversees the registry and ensures its continued relevancy to digital research and scholarship. The registry describes briefly each tool with information as to its purpose, the different tasks it can support, the person who recommended its inclusion to the registry and when, and a URL to the tool.

Tools are discoverable in different ways, such as by category, tags, and recommendations, as well as through either a keyword or advanced search. There are thirty-two categories, including "Authoring interactive works," "Collaborative editing," "Data analysis," "Publishing," "Transcription," and "Web development." One particularly useful feature is the ability to apply filters when viewing all. These filters include category, platform, cost, and licensing. Limiting by cost, license, and platform are especially beneficial for those with specific platforms, limited resources, or unpredictable degrees of IT support. *Bamboo Dirt* is constantly being updated as new tools are created or discovered. But users don't need to guess which tools are new or have been updated. They merely need to subscribe to the RSS feed to receive alerts.

Bamboo Dirt is truly a collaborative project between librarians, scholars, technologists, and others as evidenced by the fact that it allows users to sign up for a login and be given the capabilities to add tools, update information, submit reviews, share tips and tricks, and make recommendations. Allowing this crowdsourcing makes for an incredibly rich resource as individuals with different areas of expertise can improve the information provided, ensure its continued usefulness as technology changes so rapidly, and increase its reach. The site also offers a wish list

so users can suggest tools they need developed or improvements to existing tools. Although there is little to improve with this resource, it would be nice if the filter feature was more easily found and even included with the advanced search feature. Perhaps a brief description of the various search options would suffice. Also, it would be beneficial for those with limited technical skills or support for the description of each tool to rate the level of difficulty to install or use, especially in the case of the open source tools that do not usually come with customer support.

For those digital scholars just getting started, in the process of assessing and comparing which tools to use, or looking to find which tools can help move a project forward, *Bamboo Dirt* is an excellent resource. Archivists, with their unique collections, expertise in digitization and digital preservation, and pressure to make more information accessible online, should also find this resource appealing. They are being asked to work more closely with scholars and students embarking on digital scholarship projects, providing advice and leading projects. With the information that can be gleaned from *Bamboo Dirt*, archivists will be better prepared find solutions and answer the many questions about digital scholarship that are being asked.