TechMatters: Doing Digital Curation with Wakelet

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Digital curation has been defined as "the act of finding and selecting, grouping and contextualizing, preserving, maintaining, archiving, and sharing digital content" (https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/digital-curation-0). As librarians, curation is amongst our core competencies and values. Given the volume of information available online, this skill is fundamental to information literacy and is essential for us to develop in our students.

Although not explicitly referenced in the ACRL "Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education," components of the definition are reflected across the frames. Curation involves a deliberative search for information across a variety of sources and formats ("searching as strategic exploration" and "information creation as a process"), as well as evaluation of the authority, credibility, and relevance of those sources ("authority is constructed and contextual"). Students engaged in curation activities are required to think critically about the relationships between information sources, synthesize and reorganize new and existing ideas ("research as inquiry"), and learn how to provide appropriate acknowledgement for the ideas of others ("information has value"). Finally, they have the opportunity to contribute to the scholarly and research conversation through the sharing of their curatorial efforts ("scholarship as conversation").

Although certainly not required to teach curatorial skills, many digital tools have been developed to facilitate the process. These tools are designed to make managing digital resources across a variety of formats easier, and they can certainly make the process more engaging for students. One tool that is simple to use, and has the added benefit of being completely free, is Wakelet. Let's explore some its features and consider how it might be used in the classroom.

## Getting Started with Wakelet
https://wakelet.com/

Wakelet is a free, online tool that allows users to collect, organize, annotate, and share online content including articles, images, videos, and social media posts. To get started, first create an account by clicking on the "Sign up" button located on the Wakelet home page. You can either create an account by providing an email address and password, or you may choose to use a Google, Facebook, or Microsoft account. During your account

setup, you will be prompted to supply some additional information, such as topic areas of interest (e.g., arts & culture, business) and your user type (e.g., education, student). Finally, you will be prompted to install the Wakelet browser extension (which is not required, but is recommended as it will make it much easier for you to quickly bookmark content as you are browsing the web).

Customize Your Profile

Assuming that you have an interest in sharing your curated content, a good first step is to customize your public profile. To do so, select "Profile" from the main menu and then click the "Edit Profile" button. From here you can upload from your computer or choose from a pre-selected library a header image, provide a profile image or avatar, edit your name and/or Wakelet handle, and provide biographical information. When you make a collection public, it will be accessible from your profile page (see Figure 1, which contains the collection "Digital Curation").

Figure 1: Public collections are available from the user profile page

Digital Curation
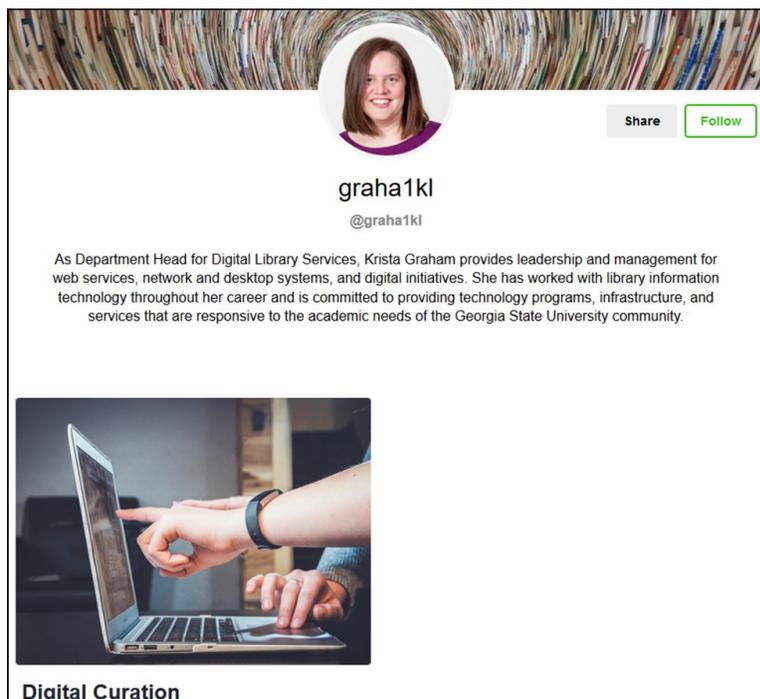
Collect Resources

At the most basic level, Wakelet is a bookmarking tool. Whether you are searching for specific information on a particular topic, or just serendipitously encounter an interesting resource as you surf the web, you can quickly save links to Wakelet for later reference. If you have installed the browser extension, all you need to do is click on Wakelet's blue "w" icon and it will open the tool in a separate window (see Figure 2). From here you can choose to save a link either to your full bookmarks list or directly into a collection. After you save the link, the Wakelet window will disappear and you can continue on with your previous activities and return to the Wakelet home page later to access your bookmarked links.

Create Collections

Obviously, if all you wanted to do was create a bookmark list you could just use your browser's built in functionality. The added value that you get with Wakelet is the ability to organize and curate your bookmarks by creating "collections". These collections are more than just lists of links: you can annotate them with text, embed videos, include social media posts, and add images. In addition to bookmarked web resources, you can also upload your own documents into your collections. And then, if you choose, you may publish and share your collections with others (see Figure 1).

To create a new collection, select "Collections" from the home page menu, and then click "Create a new collection". On the new collection template page, you will be immediately prompted to "Give your collection a title" which is the only required element. Optionally, you can add a collection description, and select or upload a background and/or cover image to add visual appeal.

In order to add items to a collection, click on the green "+" icon while in edit mode. When you do so, you will be prompted to select the type of content you wish to add. Both the "Bookmarks" and "Paste URL" options allow you to create links to online resources. The former will prompt you to make a selection from your general bookmark list, while the latter allows you to add a resource to the collection and create a new bookmark at the

**Figure 2: Save a resource link to your
bookmark collection from any web page using the Wakelet browser plugin**
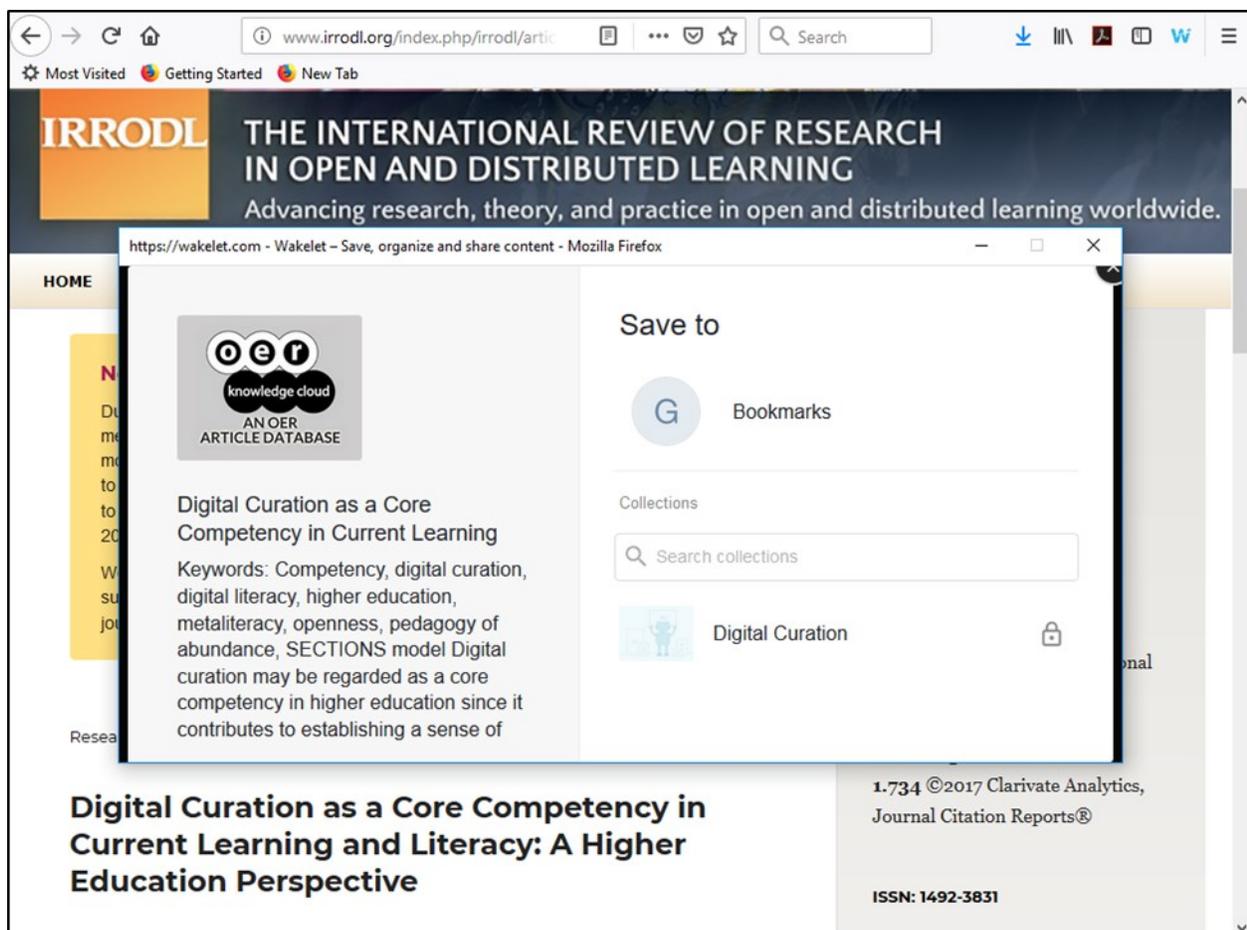
same time. With the "YouTube", "Tweets", and "Image" options you can embed each type of media content directly into your collection. In the case of YouTube or Twitter, you will be prompted to search the service to locate the content you want to add. For images, you have the option of either uploading an image or choosing from the Unsplash image library (http://unsplash.com). The PDF and Google Drive options allow you to upload files, while the text option provides the opportunity to directly write and format your own notes, whether they are on the collection in general or on a specific piece of content.

Share a Collection

By definition, a core aspect of digital curation is the sharing of content. Upon creation in Wakelet, a new collection is private by default. In order to make your content available to others, simply navigate to a collection, enter edit mode by clicking on the "Edit Collection" button, and then click the "Private" button to activate a drop-down menu where you can select either "Public" (anyone can view the collection) or "Unlisted" (only those with a link can view the collection).

Once you make your collection accessible to others, the "Share" button will be activated. Click this button to access a variety of sharing options including a tiny URL, a QR code that you use to link back to your collection, as well as direct posting links into a variety of social media platforms (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, Google classroom, Remind and Microsoft SharePoint). Alternately, Wakelet offers the option to download your collection as a PDF document that you could distribute via email or upload into a course management system. Finally, you can use the "Embed" option to generate iframe code to insert your collection into another web page or application.

Last, but certainly not least, Wakelet's newest feature (still in beta) allows you to invite other people to contribute to your collection. You can either invite specific individuals via email, or you can generate a shareable link or code that will allow anyone that has it to join as a contributor.

Curation in the Classroom with Wakelet

So, now that you know the basics of how the tool works, let's talk about how you can use it to engage your students in the curation process and integrate it into your instruction? Here are a few ideas:

- Research Journals: Task your students with documenting their research process. Have them include links to useful tools, describe their search strategies, and record their successes and failures. Consider having them respond to specific prompts or describe their experiences working through assigned tasks.

- Annotated Bibliographies: As either the first step in a larger research project, or a standalone activity, students could search for relevant sources, organize them into one or more collections, and provide annotations using the text comment feature.

- Student Portfolios: Encourage students to curate their own scholarly work by collecting and reflecting on their coursework and projects. They can upload PDFs, link to documents, include visualizations and images, embed video presentations, and then tie it all together by providing reflective commentary.

- Group Projects: Take advantage of the contributor functionality to create a Wakelet collection for each group in your class. Students can then work together to identify resources on a topic, provide evaluative comments, and ultimately collaborate on any of the types of activities described above.

- Reading/Resource Lists: Create your own curated lists (aka pathfinders) to share assigned readings with your students, or to direct their attention to the best databases and research tools for their assignments. Use the embed functionality to integrate your collection(s) into your course management system or just email a link via your class distribution list.

Conclusion

Technology certainly is not required to teach curation concepts as assignments can be crafted using print resources and physical artifacts. That said, taking curation projects into the digital realm opens up the possibilities for easily incorporating multimedia components, and in the end may simply be more engaging for your students.

Although far from the only online curation tool available to instructors, Wakelet is a strong option. With its easy setup, free price, straightforward interface and helpful browser extension, students will not need to spend a great deal of time learning how to use the tool. Instead, they can focus their efforts on the higher-order thinking processes of identifying, evaluating, and organizing the results of their curatorial efforts. And that, after all, is the ultimate goal of information literacy instruction.