Archiving the Stories of the 2018 West Virginia Teachers’ Strike

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Outline

1. Brief overview of the Teachers’ Strike
2. Origins of the archive project
3. What we’ve done so far
4. Next steps
5. Challenges and Lessons Learned
Brief overview of the WV Teachers’ Strike
The WV Teachers’ Strike

- Feb 23 - Mar 7
- Response to low pay and high healthcare costs
- Involved approximately 20,000 teachers
- Shut down schools in all 55 WV Counties
- Resulted in 5% pay raise for teachers
- Inspired teachers strikes in others states, including Oklahoma, Colorado, Arizona

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Dignity and respect are the root cause of every serious labor struggle. This was certainly the case in West Virginia’s unprecedented nine-day statewide education strike. When the workers won this past Tuesday, singing and dancing erupted among the thousands who packed the state capitol. Their final chant before leaving the building was, “Who made history? We made history!”

The strike produced a string of significant victories, not all of which are immediately tangible. Perhaps most significantly, it restored the dignity of 34,000 workers, rebuilding the pride of West Virginia’s working class and reinforcing one hell of a union that will carry the struggle forward.

Teachers across West Virginia walked off the job Thursday amid a dispute over pay and benefits, causing more than 277,000 public school students to miss classes even as educators swarmed the state Capitol in Charleston to protest.

All 55 counties in the state closed schools during Thursday’s work stoppage, Alyssa Keedy, a spokeswoman for the state’s Department of Education, said.

A two-day walkout by thousands of West Virginia public school teachers and employees to protest low pay will continue on Monday, organizers said on Friday afternoon.

The American Federation of Teachers-West Virginia, the West Virginia Education Association and the West Virginia School Service Personnel Association organized the statewide action, which left more than a quarter of a million students out of school on Thursday and Friday in the state’s 55 counties.

Christine Campbell, the president of the American Federation of Teachers-West Virginia, said the
Origins of the Archive Project
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- Faculty in WVU’s College of Education and Human services had existing relationships with strike participants
- WVU Humanities Center
- Participants from Depts. Of English, History, WVU Libraries
Origins of the Archive Project: Motivations

- Alignment with WVU’s land grant mission
- Contribute to a more well-rounded public narrative of the strike
  - Implications for Labor Movement
  - West Virginia’s political transformation
  - Personal narratives of teachers and school personnel
Origins of the Archive Project: Planning

- Collect content through linkable webform
- Center project around timeline
  - Attach videos, images, audio, text, media coverage, etc.
- Bibliography of media coverage
- Interactive maps
  - County by county activity
Origins of the Archive Project: the librarian’s role

- Prioritize preservation or presentation?
- What sorts of objects can be contributed?
- Intellectual property considerations
- Should there be size limits? Time limits for video and audio?
- What kinds of metadata do we need to collect? How uniform do we need it to be?
- Investigate tools, platforms
Origins of the Archive Project: Tasks

- Investigate digital tools and platforms
- Develop prompts for data and metadata collection
What we’ve done so far
Settling on a platform: Omeka S

- Preserve the Baltimore Uprising 2015 Archive Project
  - User contributions in different formats
  - Geolocation data and mapping function
- Worked with Library Systems Development to get Omeka installation ready
  - Omeka vs. Omeka S
  - 1 install/site vs. 1 install/multiple sites
Learning to Use Omeka S

- Identifying necessary modules to install
- Figuring out how to create forms to collect data
Preparing for Data Collection

- IRB Submitted
- Content recruitment letters drafted
- Collection forms created in Omeka and Google Forms
Putting up a live site
https://omekas.lib.wvu.edu/omeka-s/s/west-virginia-teacher-strike/page/about
Next Steps
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- Recruit a pilot group of contributor
- Design and context
- Ongoing maintenance and administration
- Duration and Preservation
Challenges and Lessons Learned
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- Project Management Practices
- Who “owns” the project?
- Who’s in and who’s out?
- No established practices for supporting digital scholarship in the library
Conclusion