

The Woman's Suffrage Movement: Dayton, Ohio (1890-1920)

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About

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This site was created as the creative component for the completion of my Masters of Humanities creative thesis project in addition to my Certificate in Public History from Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio. This website is meant to be used as an educational tool for students studying the topic of the women's suffrage movement, particularly in Dayton, Ohio. It is intended to be viewed as a virtual museum exhibit on the topic. As this is such a large topic to cover, I have chosen to look only at a small part of the larger topic through the lens of seven Dayton, Ohio women's experiences and participation in the women's suffrage movement. Thus, it is not comprehensive in any sense of the word, but is instead intended to be a glimpse back in time into the strength and determination of these brave and pioneering women.

Interpretive Goals

My interpretive goals for this project are to be able to analyze these women's stories and share them with my intended audience. I chose to showcase the Women's Suffrage Movement in Dayton, Ohio because it is a great example of women of different ethnicities, races, and societal backgrounds working together from independent fronts to achieve the overall larger goal: the establishment of voting rights for women in the Miami Valley (and the rest of the United States). Research indicates several of these women were alive at the same time and worked together; several were related or were connected to each other through marriage and others through social connections. It was the dream of voting rights for women among other social and political issues that linked these women together. Encouraging

them to overcome larger barriers for themselves, and ultimately, gave them the strength to become pivotal members in the Women's Suffrage Movement and the community here in Dayton, Ohio. The actions of these women helped lead to one of the most pivotal moments in American history and changed the path of not only their nation, but also their beloved city. By achieving their goal of women's suffrage, their role and status in society was elevated, and they were given a chance to help shape the future of this country and their city.

Why this topic?

When considering the range of topics for my creative thesis project, I chose to pursue the Women's Suffrage Movement because the idea of these women coming together to pursue a common goal is something that can speak to people even in today's modern times. These women did not join this movement simply because it was another cause to rally behind, but because it had the potential to change their lives and gain them a more public role in society. It would allow them to make a difference in Dayton in ways unavailable to them in the past. While women as a gender have since gained a considerable amount of ground since those times, battles for equality among the sexes continue to exist today. These women serve as a reminder and inspiration for people today to continue to fight for opportunities for equality in a world at times still filled with inequality, and not just between the sexes. In reviewing these women and their independent struggles while pursuing their goal, people may be inspired to continue to tackle their own goals and ultimately be encouraged to continue to overcome the obstacles that block their pathways to success and happiness. Inspiring others to overcome the obstacles in their lives is not the express purpose of this project, but it is intended to reach the audience on more than a purely intellectual level. It is hoped that they take something away from the exhibit and its content.

Museum Education and CORE Teaching Standards

For inspiration and reference, I used the American Library Association website as a guide for assembling an interactive exhibit that would engage my target audience. I also reviewed the educational website references provided on their website for further guidance and to aid in my understanding of how to create a website that is both educational and entertaining for my target audience. Helen Adam's "Writing Effective Museum Text" online resource also helped me to think about how I wanted to present my topic to my audience. Utilizing her technique of charting out what the "big idea" is and then supporting that with additional information points helped me to organize my materials in a coherent and logical manner that would be easy for my audience to follow.

Utilizing the CORE teaching methods, I referenced and based the lesson plan and other educational materials on a model from the National Women's History Museum that was available online. Due to the materials CORE standard certification, I became familiar with the expectations of a CORE standard program, and was able to learn from and adapt this model to my own material. It allowed me to follow CORE teaching standards and work to develop an engaging and informative project.

Website Design

The website was created using the content management system WordPress. I was able to use a template design called Bushwick. In the beginning stages of this project, my technical knowledge was not extensive by any means, and I wanted to use this project as an opportunity to learn more about using multimedia tools such as WordPress. During the design phase of the project I learned a lot simply by testing things out and seeing what worked and what did not. I am extremely grateful for the help page on WordPress.com which helped walk me through a lot of the steps in setting up my website in the beginning. Also, with the help and advice of others more versed technology I was able to use other programs to my advantage. For example, in order to manage the amount of information I found in the archives (and to provide myself with a copy to reference later) I took photographs of the relevant items, photographs and documents on my cell phone. I was then able to use the Google Drive app on my phone to not only save and back them up in my Google Mail account, but to get them onto my laptop and then upload the relevant materials to the website.

When I began this project, I had a certain aesthetic in mind for how I wanted the website to appear and how I wanted to share the information with the users. I wanted the design to have an old-world feel to it so that it would complement the historical photos and materials I planned to share on it. At the same time, I wanted it to be accessible and not overwhelming to the user in appearance or in the presentation of the text. With the topic of the Women's Suffrage Movement being so vast, I wanted to find a way to break the information down into manageable pieces. I feel that I have met both the design and aesthetic goals I set for myself in the beginning of this process.

Using WordPress for this project is engaging multimedia because it allows each student to explore and develop their own understanding of the material based on the flexibility of the website format. Print materials convey information in a linear format – with a starting and finishing point. I designed my website to, “. . . encourage readers to navigate their own paths through the information in a non-linear way that may be different than the path of other readers or the intended path of the author,” (Coiro, 459). It invites the reader to naturally progress from one topic

to another. I wanted my website to be accessible to all students, and take into account the fact that each child's learning abilities are unique to them. I did this by allowing the materials to be referenced based on a student's curiosity, and ultimately, to allow them to choose their own pathway through the material. According to Julie Coiro, "Never before has it been more necessary that children learn to read, write and think critically. It's not just point and click. It's point, read, think and click," (459). I believe that using WordPress allowed me to do this by giving me the ability to create a website that remains both engaging yet informative, and which allows both teacher and student the ability to explore and satisfy their curiosity about the seven women profiled and the Women's Suffrage Movement in Dayton, Ohio.

For students with disabilities, the website should also be accessible through a variety of software platforms and programs that would allow them to engage with the materials. Using programs like Dragon NaturallySpeaking or Naturally Sounding Voices, the user would be able to listen to the material on the website. Spoken word commands available through both Macintosh and Windows platforms are compatible with the website, and allow the user to verbally navigate between the pages. Images can also be selected individually and opened in a new browser window to provide larger versions of each picture for closer study and allow the student to read the source materials as needed. For the visually impaired, the text-to-voice software would read the tagline of the photo. I provided a succinct tagline for each picture that would give the visually-impaired student an understanding of the photograph and provide enough information for their Intervention Specialist to further translate the image into an appropriate format, such as Braille printings.

Best Practices for Educational Websites for Middle School Children

In creating the website component of this project, I researched the best practices for educational websites for middle school aged children to figure out how I wanted to approach the task of creating the website. According to Chow et. al., "While there is a growing body of literature on the cognitive, affective, and information seeking habits of children and adolescents, there is a scarcity of research on how to apply this information to the design of information portals for youth that are increasingly proliferating the web for social, educational, and entertainment purposes," (91). The authors continue, stating, "Intermediate, preteen readers (age 9-12) are in the concrete operational stage where "intelligence is demonstrated through logical and systematic manipulation of symbols related to concrete objects" (Huitt & Hummel, 2003)" (qtd. in Chow et. al., 90-91). Trial-and-error with physical not abstract objects is how children of this age understand the world and in the digital environment a "... list of alphabet citations may mean much less to children at this level than an electronic display of familiar book covers" (Cooper, 2005, p. 288)," (qtd. in Chow et. al., 90-91). While there has been some research conducted on the subject, technology

is an ever-changing field with a constant influx of updates and new applications. This makes it difficult for researchers to determine what the best practices are for creating a website for middle school children (and other children in general), as a consensus of the research conducted has yet to be reached.

In my research, I did not find a list of best practices or criteria to be met, but there were four common points in the articles I read on creating age appropriate websites for middle school children. These four points were to: (1) write for your intended audience and do not assume knowledge they do not have (i.e. tackle the topic and design from their perspective, not an adult perspective), (2) remember that reading comprehension of online material is different than linear print (readers tend to skim rather than read), (3) keep things simple and easy to use (if visitors get frustrated they will move on), (4) make the design visually pleasing, but not at the expense of the reader finding the information that they are looking for (this will only annoy them). "In a study of 55 children, Nielsen (2002) actually found that children tended to have an easier time navigating websites for adults rather than children because children's sites oftentimes are "convoluted" (Dubroy, 2010)," (qtd. in Chow et. al., 92). In addition to this research, I also used some of the tips given by Helen Adams of the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, England on writing effective museum text. Adams suggests writing for your audience, not your peers and to go from the specific to the general. She also recommends basing any explanation in what the reader is likely to already know, and to always explain specialist or technical vocabulary. Lastly, do not think of using clear, straightforward language as 'dumbing it down,' (Adams, 2011).

Organization of Website

This website was organized with the above points in mind. How does it meet these criteria? (1) I tried to keep my intended audience in mind at all times and not assume knowledge they do not have on the subject. (2) I had to remember that readers tend to skim rather than read the material in its entirety. I also tried to make the design appealing enough and the story interesting enough to grab their attention and make them want to keep reading. (3) The template I chose allowed me to design a simple and easy to use website. In certain areas of the website where I thought the user might need further instruction, it allowed me to include notes to the user on how to proceed. (4) My goal was make the design visually pleasing, but not at the expense of the reader finding the information that they are looking for. I did not want the information to be lost in the aesthetics. As written by Chow et. al. on the subject, "In a study of 55 children, Nielsen (2002) actually found that children tended to have an easier time navigating websites for adults rather than children because children's sites oftentimes are "convoluted" (Dubroy, 2010)," (qt. in, 92). I also often referred to Adam's tips on writing effective museum text to help me stay


on track when writing the website text. It helped to think of it as exhibit text in narrative form. Using these techniques, I feel that I was able to create a website that is accessible for middle school children and that I met the above criteria.

For more detailed information on this project, click the link below to read my full thesis report.

[Thesis Report \(Full Text\)](#)

<https://womensuffragemovementindayton.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/final-copy-of-paper-8-31-2015.pdf>

[Blog at WordPress.com.](#) [The Bushwick Theme.](#)

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