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5-17-2024

Broadening Access: Digitization and Transcription of the Waring Inaugural Theses since 2015

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Broadening Access: Digitization and Transcription of the Waring Inaugural Theses since 2015

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Digital Archivist, Waring Historical Library (MUSC)

About Me and the Waring Digital Archives

- Digital Archivist of the Waring since November 2014
- Waring Digital Archives program builds, maintains, manages, and preserves the Waring Historical Library Digital Collections and MEDICA@MUSC, MUSC's institutional repository
- 1 FTE + interns/volunteers in a given semester



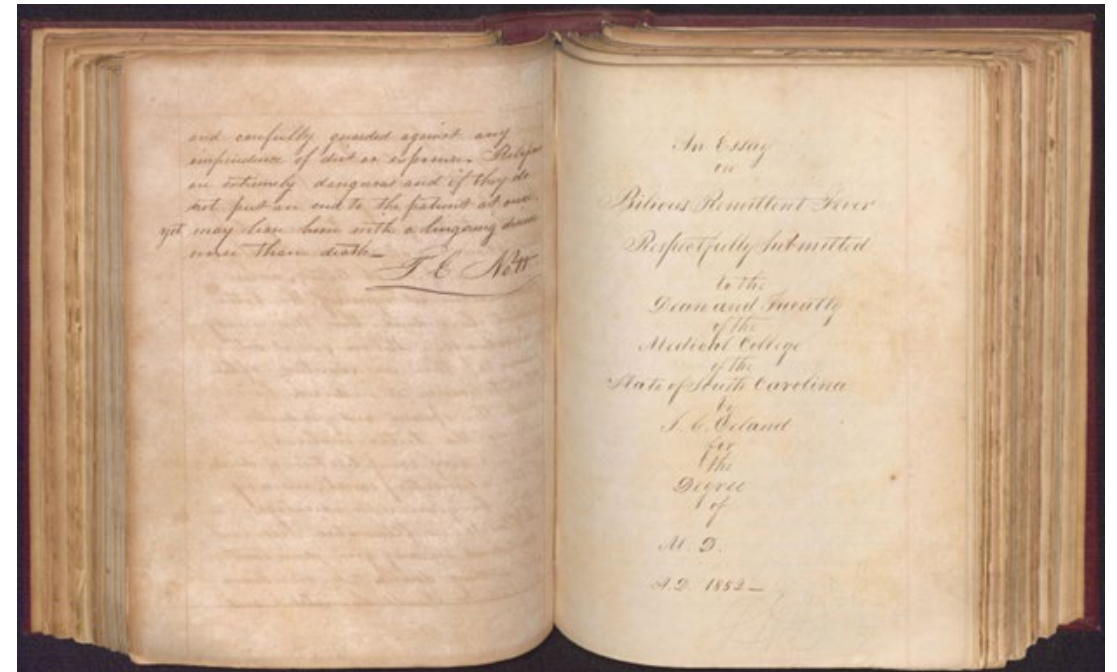
Waring Digital Collections

- Digital Collections are comprised of digitized collections of the Waring Manuscript and MUSC University Archives Collections
- Supports library's mission to document the history of the health sciences in South Carolina/Southeast, and MUSC
- Consist of 45 collections
- Harvested into the South Carolina Digital Library and the Digital Public Library of America



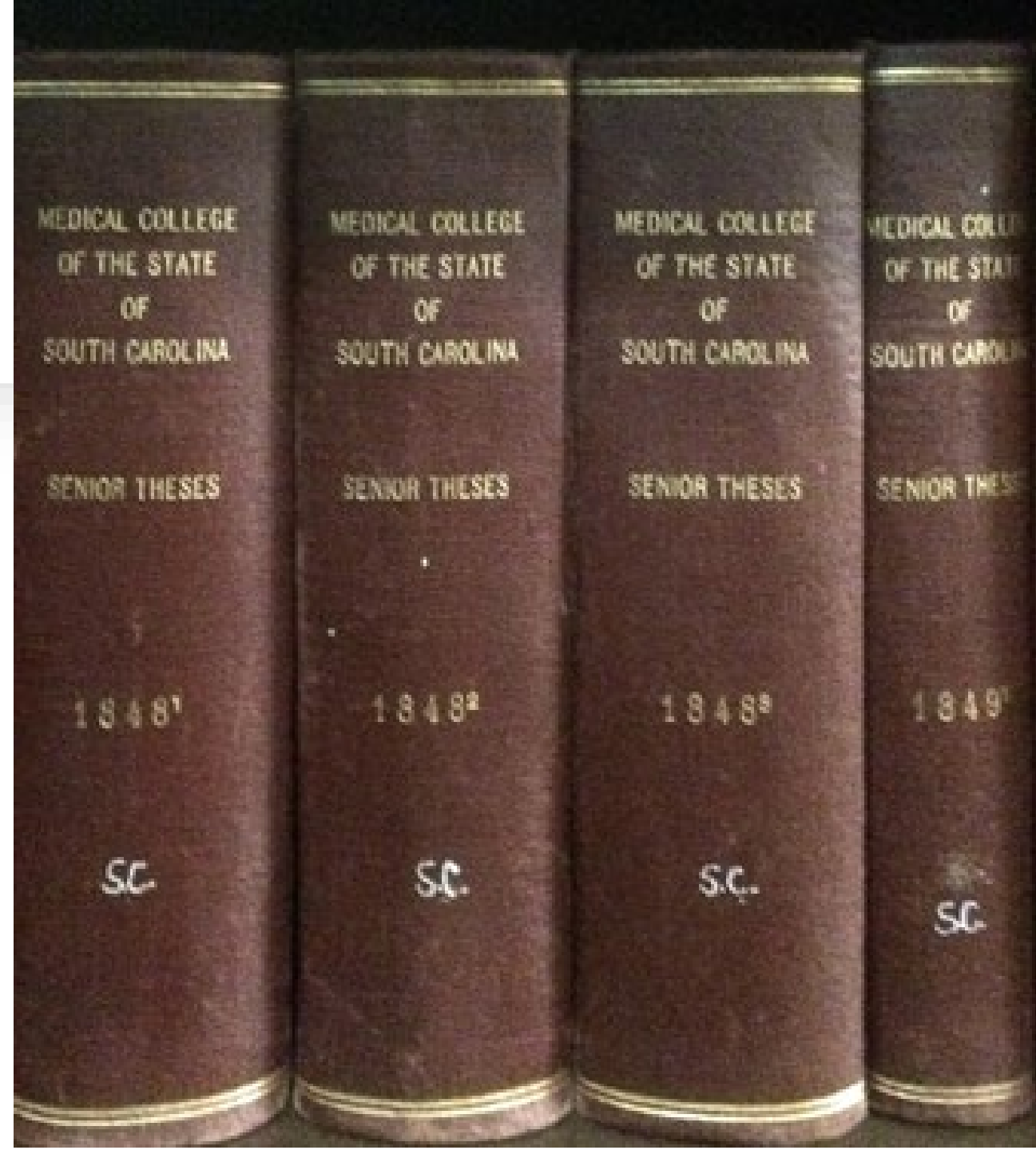
Origin of Waring Inaugural Theses Digital Collection

- Presumably, project started in 2010/2011
- Originally hosted in Lowcountry Digital Library (LCDL) before migration to the Waring's self-hosted digital collections in 2014/2015
- Consistently ranks within top 3 digital collections with most page views



More about Inaugural Theses Digital Collection

- Addresses an array of medical topics, providing insight into the medical, social, and environmental landscape of the antebellum South
- Of 1,858 theses in collection, 778 currently available in digital collection
- 265 in digital collection currently transcribed



NNLM Express Digitization Awards

- Two grant projects dedicated to digitization of inaugural theses
- Awarded by the Network of the National Library of Medicine (NNLM)
- Last awarded in 2015
- 2015 project to focus on digitization and transcription of theses relating to fevers



2015 Grant Project

Goals:

- Provide better access to the underutilized collection, scanning 379 theses
- Develop a cost-effective alternative to outsourcing transcription
- Invest in the skills and knowledge-base of the WHL's primary users
- Improve the keyword searchability of the digital collection

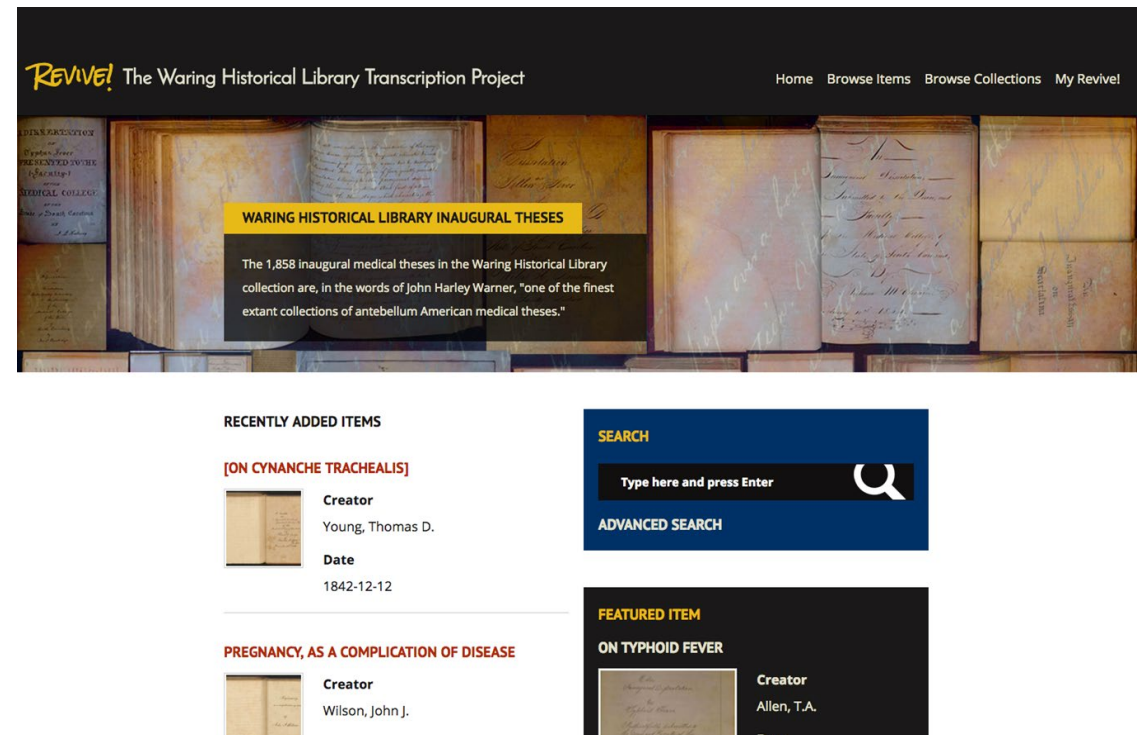
Workflow:

- Digitization started in September 2015, scanning selected theses chronologically
- Employed one assistant
- 8 to 115 pages, and were digitized at a rate of 20 theses per week
- Also entailed developing platform to crowdsource transcription

Revive!

Transcription Project

- Launched in 2016 to crowdsource transcription of theses
- Followed design of *Making History: Transcribe* by Library of Virginia and *DIY History – Transcribe* by UI Libraries
- Platform integrated by MUSC Libraries systems engineer
- Digital Archivist configured web interface, uploaded theses to Omeka, and managed user registrations



Design of Revive!

Applications

Web publishing platform and CMS



Plugin, bridge between CMS and MediaWiki

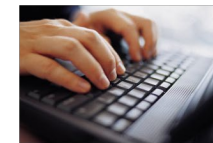


Enables user transcription submission



Workflow

How **REVIVE!** Works



End user views collection in Omeka and edits/submits transcriptions to wiki by way of Scripto plugin



Transcriptions are stored and managed by MySQL. Upon completion, the library will download them and upload them to its primary CMS, CONTENTdm to enable keyword searchability of the digital collection.

Project Outcomes

- Digitized 437 inaugural theses
- Launched Revive! transcription platform
- Recruited a number of transcription users from Waring community



Project Strengths

- Project assistant was recent MLIS graduate of USC, experienced in digital collections, extensive training was not needed
- Although hiccups were encountered with digitization and configuring the transcription platform, seamless progress still occurred
- Waring Library Society members were eager to become transcribers



Project Challenges: Digitization

- Two scanners used during course of digitization
- Scanner 1 required 10-15 minutes of calibration each day before use and throughout scanning session; greater lag between capture time compared to Scanner 2
- Scanner 2 installed in November 2015 malfunction within weeks of installation and required repair
- Returned to use of Scanner 1



Project Challenges: Transcription

- Difficult getting and keeping users engaged in transcription
- User registration was wonky and required activation by a platform admin (digital archivist or systems engineer)
- Platform did not generate notifications of transcriptions but kept short list of recent changes
- Required uploading theses to two content management systems and downloading transcript files page by page



Project Challenges: Marketing

- Limitations on reach of marketing for project
- Intended audience(s) not defined
- Enterprise/University marketing vehicles often miss the mark in getting attention of employees/students; one vehicle didn't exist to reach all



Revive! Project Takeaways

- Revive! wouldn't be approved today due to security concerns of the University
- Marketing the project would be more seamless now
- Probably would have more student engagement due to FLEX Humanities program
- Strategies for engaging the right audience must be considered before committing to such a project
- Having an informed discussion about system requirements and project needs before committing is also essential



Current Digitization/Transcription Efforts

- Collaborative efforts of group to transcribe, provide biographical context to authors, identify works mentioning enslaved, and to enrich subject headings
- Assistance of students/volunteer
- Work will include cataloger and updates to catalog records as project progresses



Looking Ahead

- Rich data gleaned from theses
- Project could be developed similar to:
 - CSI Dixie
 - Enslaved.org
- Publication of data would be dependent on IRB approval



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