Augmenting the Modern American Poetry Site's Update With Confessional Poetry, Sylvia Plath, and W.D. Snodgrass

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Augmenting the Modern American Poetry Site’s Update
With Confessional Poetry, Plath and Snodgrass

An Interactive Qualifying Project
to be submitted to the Faculty
of the
WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Science

By:

_______________________  _________________________
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Sponsored by the Modern American Poetry Website

Approved:

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Professor James Cocola, Major Advisor
Abstract

This report describes the techniques we used to assist the transition of the Modern American Poetry Site (MAPS) from an obsolescent version to a modern iteration. MAPS’s editors updated the site with a more robust content management system. We assisted this transition by creating MAPS pages for a school of poetry and a new poet; adding old and new content to an existing poet's page; assembling a historical timeline; and laying the foundations of a contributor's guide. We conclude the report with a display of our results and recommendations for further work with MAPS.
# Table of Contents

 Contents

Abstract .................................................................................................................................................. 2

Table of Contents .................................................................................................................................. 3

Executive Summary ................................................................................................................................. 8

The Reasons for our Project .................................................................................................................. 8

The Results of our Project ..................................................................................................................... 9

MAPS Going Forward .............................................................................................................................. 10

1. Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 12

2. Background ......................................................................................................................................... 15

    2.1 A Brief History of the Modern American Poetry Site ................................................................. 15

    2.2 Website Design and Content Management ............................................................................... 18

        2.2.1 Making and Maintaining Websites in the 1990’s ................................................................. 18

        2.2.2 Developments in Content Management and Unified Design ..................................... 21

        2.2.3 The Strengths of Drupal .................................................................................................... 23

        2.2.4 The MAPS of the Twenty-First Century ........................................................................... 25

    2.3 Confessional Poetry ....................................................................................................................... 28

        2.3.1 The Confessional Poets: An Explanation of What Made Them Confessional 28

        2.3.2 Sylvia Plath and the Hughes Controversy ......................................................................... 31

        2.3.3 The Progression of the Plath Dialogue ............................................................................. 33
3. Methodology ........................................................................................................................................... 35

3.1 Migrating Content from the Old Site to the New: Sylvia Plath .................................................. 38

3.2 Creating a Landing Page for Confessional Poetry ........................................................................... 41

3.3 Augmenting the Confessional Poets with an Additional Page: W. D. Snodgrass .................. 43

3.4 Finding Useful New Critical Content for Plath and Snodgrass ...................................................... 44

3.5 Selecting Useful New Critical Content for Plath and Snodgrass .................................................. 46

3.6 Laying the Foundations of a Contributor’s Guide ............................................................................. 52

3.7 Arranging Information for a Timeline of Confessional Poetry ...................................................... 53

4. Results: A Brief Recap .......................................................................................................................... 55

5. Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Work ........................................................................ 58

5.1 Future Content for MAPS ................................................................................................................. 58

5.2 Possible Improvements in MAPS Management ............................................................................... 61

Appendices ............................................................................................................................................... 63

Appendix A: The MAPS Member’s Guide ............................................................................................ 63

Without an account .................................................................................................................................. 63

Your Account ............................................................................................................................................. 63

Interacting with content ............................................................................................................................ 64

Adding new content .................................................................................................................................. 64

Appendix B: Slides from our Presentation ............................................................................................... 68

Appendix C: A Portion of the Spreadsheet for the Timeline .................................................................... 83
Appendix D: Division of Labor / Authorship ................................................................. 84

Bibliography .................................................................................................................. 87

Bibliography of Website Design and Content Management ........................................ 87

Bibliography of Poetry ..................................................................................................... 88

Bibliography Specific to Sylvia Plath ............................................................................. 91

Bibliography Specific to W. D. Snodgrass ................................................................. 94

Miscellaneous Bibliography ......................................................................................... 95
List of Figures

Figure 1: Screen capture of MAPS home page from February 11, 2009 by archive.org/web (the “Way Back Machine”) 16
Figure 2: MAPS home page from June 15, 2011, captured by the Way Back Machine 17
Figure 3: A screen capture from the Old MAPS 18
Figure 4: Screenshot of Bob Kaufman’s Old MAPS Poet Landing Page 19
Figure 5: The home page of library.gsu.edu, as captured on October 23, 1999 by the Way Back Machine 20
Figure 6: An example of a CSS, with code on the left and the result on the right 22
Figure 7: A side-by-side comparison of the homepage of Artinfo.com; as captured by the Way Back Machine in 2011, before Propeople’s intervention (left); and as captured in 2014 (right) 24
Figure 8: A side-by-side comparison of the homepage of the Dordrechts Museum website, as captured by the Way Back Machine in 2009, before Joy Group’s intervention (left); and as captured in 2014 (right) 25
Figure 9: Two charts of MAPS metadata 27
Figure 10: Our project’s methodology flowchart 37
Figure 11: An example of publication information found through Google Books 40
Figure 12: Another example of publication information found through WPI Gordon Library’s “Summon” service 40
Figure 13: Souza designed this logo for Confessional Poetry in Solidworks 42
Figure 14: Confessional poetry description 55
Figure 15: A side-by-side comparison of Plath’s poet page on the old site (left) and the new (right).

Figure 16: W.D. Snodgrass’s poet page
Executive Summary

The Reasons for our Project

Cary Nelson, editor of Oxford University Press’s Anthology of Modern American Poetry, created the Modern American Poetry Site (MAPS) in 1999. The website served as an excellent free companion and complement to the anthology, but regardless of whether or not one had read the book, one could still make use of MAPS. The site fostered an online community for poets and scholars, enabling them to share criticism and analyses of poems, media, teaching tools—everything that could spark and facilitate academic discussion of modern American poetry. The community thrived for years, but the website’s design and infrastructure remained stagnant.

Professor Bartholomew Brinkman of Framingham State University joined the MAPS team in late 2010 and began to update the obsolescent site. His efforts led to the creation of an entirely new MAPS with Drupal, an open-source content management system capable of building websites more technologically advanced and aesthetically pleasing than those coded in straight HTML. When the new MAPS functioned well enough for small-scale testing and hosted some of the original site’s content, its administrators at Framingham State University and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign deemed it appropriate to sponsor an Interactive Qualifying Project at Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

The project’s goal began as broad and simple: facilitate MAPS’s transition from the old version to the new. We (Sneha Shastry and Deanna Souza) began our work with Brinkman and our advisor, Professor James Cocola, at the end of October 2013. In order to maximize the impact of our intervention, we decided to focus on one school of poetry and two poets, and within their MAPS pages, perform many of the tasks a site user ought to be able to complete. We selected
topics around which lively critical debate thrived: Confessional Poetry, Sylvia Plath, and W. D. Snodgrass. After careful consideration, we chose to:

- Contribute to the landing page for Confessional Poetry movement
- Migrate all content from Plath’s page on the old to the new
- Create a new MAPS poet page for Snodgrass
- Upload new content to these poets’ pages
- Begin a contributor’s guide to serve as a companion to our template
- Assemble relevant historical content into a timeline

The Results of our Project

Many of the results of our project are available for anyone to view online. For the Confessional Poetry landing page, we created a logo, wrote a description and added a quote. For Plath’s poet page, we migrated over seventy critical essays and excerpts, as well as an interview and twenty-two images. For the poet pages of both Plath and Snodgrass, we added half a dozen excerpts from the recent critical dialogue, two more quotes, and another six pictures. Our Contributor’s Guide and Timeline are not yet completely represented on the site, but readers of this report can find them in Appendices A and C, respectively.

On Thursday, March 27, 2014, we presented our work to a class studying American Literature: Modernism to the Present. This presentation afforded us one of the most immediately rewarding results of our project: we had successfully stimulated our fellow undergraduate students into academic discourse on Modern American Poetry. We were especially fascinated by the parallels they spotted between Confessional poets’ public display of private matters and the current societal norm of people posting details of their everyday business on Facebook and Twitter. These
comparisons led to several fascinating questions to which we will never truly know the answers. However, by inspiring our peers to ask them, we have encouraged a classroom of people to think critically. Our work on MAPS can continue to prompt thought and discussion, even though our time with this project is over.

MAPS Going Forward

The Modern American Poetry Site has vast potential for promoting literary theory. It can help students in their studies. It can provide teachers with a resource to recommend to their pupils, and with a forum for exchanging pedagogical tools, such as syllabi and assignments. MAPS can even foster interest in the academic and aesthetic aspects of an art that is closely tied to the culture of one of the world’s most influential countries. Through our work with MAPS, we have come to the conclusion that the study of modern American poetry is a rewarding experience which challenges a person’s preconceptions and hones her skills for critical thought. The possible benefits of such a mental exercise are frankly innumerable.

Our work accomplished much, but MAPS still has room to grow. The Confessional School of Poetry landing page on MAPS has more content now, so future contributors could turn to it for an example as they fill in information for the other twenty schools of poetry on the site. Similarly, the Plath and Snodgrass pages stand as templates for future content on the site’s other hundred and eighty-four poets. All of these pages would benefit from more recent criticism and quotes; in many cases, they also require descriptions and pictures.

Future MAPS contributors need not be constrained to improving what is already on the site. Many modern American poets have fascinating bodies of work, and each could well merit a page on MAPS. During our consideration of poets not yet represented on the site, we discussed
Delmore Schwartz, Ted Berrigan, Frederick Seidel, Kenneth Goldsmith, Valerie Martinez, and Aimee Nezhukumatathil. The second edition of the Anthology of Modern American Poetry features more poets who have not yet gotten pages on MAPS. There are certainly others as well, some of whom will easily fall into the Schools of Poetry already listed, and some whose innovative works may prompt the creation of other School of Poetry pages.

We encourage future MAPS contributors to explore poetry and critical discourse in new mediums. As for poetry, some works are now in the public domain. Librivox.org, a website in for which volunteers read public domain works aloud and provide the audio tracks for free, does house some of Walt Whitman’s poems at least. For criticism, one can turn to traditional academic publications, but the internet may host any number of obscure but wonderfully useful scholarly blogs. Criticism may come in all shapes and sizes--perhaps a #AnneSexton Twitter feed may merit MAPS’s attention. Whether MAPS contributors are looking for poetry, information about the poets or criticism about the poems, we hope that they will remember not to adhere too closely to former conventions.
1. Introduction

In the year 1999, the USA branch of Oxford University Press published its first edition of its *Anthology of Modern American Poetry*, edited by Cary Nelson, a Professor of English at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The anthology collected 750 poems by 161 American poets and related critical essays. Content began with Walt Whitman and included, according to the publisher, “numerous poems by women, minority, and progressive writers only rediscovered” in the 1980’s and 90’s (*Anthology of Modern American Poetry*). In addition to assembling and editing the 1296-page printed volume, Nelson and members of his advisory board had a prescient idea: an online community for poets and scholars, for criticism and analysis, for media, for teaching tools—for everything that could spark and facilitate academic discussion of modern American poetry. Thus, the Modern American Poetry Site (MAPS) was born. Though each resource functioned perfectly well without the other, MAPS served as an excellent free companion and complement to the anthology. The site aided research and discussion related to the anthology, while the anthology provided contextual background and a firsthand resource for the work of the featured modern American poets.

The shape of the internet has changed over the past fourteen years, but MAPS’s design and internal structure have remained relatively stationary. Professor Bartholomew Brinkman of Framingham State University joined the MAPS team in late 2010, and under his early guidance, the site’s infrastructure and user interface began to show signs of improvement. Still, it is not uncommon for a long-lived website to occasionally undergo a thorough overhaul. Between MAPS’s increasingly obsolete content management system and the anticipated release of the second edition of the anthology in June 2014, the time was ripe to transition MAPS from a display of informative but stagnant prose into an interactive and dynamic platform for sharing
information. Brinkman spearheaded the creation of a new MAPS with Drupal, an open-source content management system capable of building websites more technologically advanced and aesthetically pleasing than those coded in straight HTML in the late twentieth century.

When the new MAPS functioned well enough for small-scale testing and hosted some of the original site’s content, Framingham State University and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign deemed it appropriate to sponsor an Interactive Qualifying Project at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. The project’s goal began as broad and simple: facilitate MAPS’s transition from the old version to the new. We (Sneha Shastry and Deanna Souza) began our work with Brinkman and our advisor, Professor James Cocola, at the end of October 2013. Through meetings on our campus and constant email correspondence, Brinkman helped us define the scope of our project, increased our understanding of the website’s history and functionality, and gave us his written procedure for adding new content to the site. As the new MAPS was still decidedly a work in progress, he provided us with timely website support, which included adjusting the permissions of our user accounts and troubleshooting many of the glitches we encountered.

We set out to improve the MAPS experience for future students, teachers and poetry enthusiasts. To this end, we ultimately decided to provide a template for future site users’ contributions by performing several MAPS tasks ourselves. We narrowed our focus to a single school of poetry and used it to demonstrate a new MAPS school of poetry landing page. We collected historical content related to our school to facilitate its display on the site. We also fleshed out the page of one poet within that school by transferring the old MAPS content to the new site, and selecting excerpts from more recent criticism to add as well. Then, we created a new page for a poet within the same school who had not previously been featured on MAPS, and added content
to it. As we worked on these various goals, we learned many of the processes of the new site and collected our findings in a contributor’s guide.

Though the new site requires more work towards its content and content management, we have witnessed and participated in its improvement. When the new MAPS is complete, it can promote the academia of modern American poetry with superior technology. Anyone with internet access will be able to learn about and engage in the critical discussion of his or her favorite modern American poems. Students in high school, college and programs of graduate study will turn to MAPS as a launching pad for their research. Teachers will have new ways to share resources. Poetry critics will take advantage of enhanced opportunities to publish or review original critical essays. At the very least, the new iteration of the site will improve the experience of the current MAPS community; at the most, it can directly or indirectly benefit anyone with interest in poetry.
2. Background

In this chapter, we begin with a brief overview of the Modern American Poetry Site, along with general problems associated with the transition of MAPS to its new iteration and possible solutions. Next we will explain standard practices of web design used in the 1990’s, developments made since then, the strengths of Drupal, and finally the current state of MAPS. We will then synthesize best practices related to the transition that were agreed upon by the constituents of this project. We conclude by introducing the open-source content management system Drupal, a background on Confessional poetry, and how they both are related to this project.

2.1 A Brief History of the Modern American Poetry Site

In the beginning, MAPS was ahead of its time. By the middle of 2001—the very year which saw the launch of Wikipedia—MAPS had not only published over fifty original pieces of criticism, but had also become a clearinghouse for excerpts from books and essays which were of otherwise limited availability (Wikipedia). Researchers could turn to MAPS for useful information about their topics of interest, and if a particular excerpt struck them as useful, they would then have the information necessary to find the full article or book and purchase or borrow it. Beyond print, MAPS was also a repository for images and linked to other resources that housed audio and video content.

The MAPS Advisory Board included representatives from City College of New York, Emory University, George Washington University, Southern Illinois University, Temple University, Smith College, the University of Illinois, the University of Iowa, the University of Oregon, and the University of Pennsylvania. Users and contributors spanned the country, and were not limited to the United States. In the succinct words of MAPS Advisory Board member
Richard Powers, MAPS was “a living, breathing conversation between hundreds of poets, scholars, and readers, constantly growing.”

However, though the MAPS community and its resources grew, the website design remained stagnant for many years. Matthew Hurt of the University of Illinois designed MAPS’s home page in a way reminiscent of a book’s title page. The oldest screenshot available (Figure 1) dates back to 2009, but its copyright notices goes back to 1999-2002. This remained the home page through 2010, and for several months in 2011, the website’s home page reflected maintenance problems, with pictures and the logo unable to load.

![Figure 1: Screen capture of MAPS home page from February 11, 2009 by archive.org/web (the “Way Back Machine”)](image)
As mentioned above, Brinkman joined the MAPS team in late 2010. His contributions led to swift improvement: by June of that year, the homepage was able to load the logo and pictures (Figure 2). Brinkman also advanced the site’s design. He implemented a menu across the top of the screen and included a link to a social media site (Twitter) — two website features that front-end users may now take for granted.

![Figure 2: MAPS home page from June 15, 2011, captured by the Way Back Machine](image)

Brinkman’s website improvements were not restricted to the user interface. He introduced metadata, a set of data which categorizes, organizes and links other data. We will expand upon the significance of this step below. When Brinkman began work on the new iteration of the site,
he updated the original version of the site with an announcement of the anthology’s new edition. This continued to be accessible during the new site’s development process. Meanwhile, he and his collaborators developed the new MAPS. When they had prepared the website for small-scale testing, it was ready for our intervention.

2.2 Website Design and Content Management

2.2.1 Making and Maintaining Websites in the 1990’s

In the late twentieth century, websites echoed the external and internal design of their predecessors: print media. Like the pages of books, articles, and reports like this one, each webpage had a title or logo perched on top, followed perhaps by a menu and definitely by content in a standard Heading-Subheading-Text pattern (Internet Archive).

Some websites featured borders (often of advertisements) and many websites hosted pictures—but these properties could also be found in books, journals, etc. Webmasters also managed information in a way similar to the editors of encyclopedias: subject matter was divided into categories which each had their own electronic folders, and these folders were subdivided into subcategories, and so on. If one could categorize an article or essay in more than one way, the
webmaster chose in which folder to place it and potentially cross-referenced it with a hyperlink to the other relevant information.

For MAPS, this Top-Down organizational method translated to some pages being sparsely populated, and others being crowded and poorly organized. The content of poet landing pages was restricted to the poet’s name, dates of birth and death, and links to biographical information and criticism (refer to Figure 4). If a website visitor clicked one of the links, it would bring him to a page with every excerpt related to the topic, listed sometimes in no particular order. For example, if he started at Randall Jarrell’s landing page and clicked the link titled “On ‘2nd Air Force,’” he would find part of a letter Jarrell wrote in 1945 to poet Robert Lowell, followed by a short excerpt from a 1990 biography by William Pritchard, and then a longer excerpt by Suzanne Ferguson from 1971.

![Figure 4: Screenshot of Bob Kaufman’s Old MAPS Poet Landing Page](image)

Landing pages for schools of poetry either did not exist, or were obscure and difficult to find. For example, the only way to navigate to the pages on Angel Island Poetry and Japanese American Concentration Camp Haiku was to find the alphabetical list of poets and navigate to the sections of names beginning with the letters A and J, respectively. One would only know these
options were available if one already knew about them, or if one happened to notice them while searching the alphabetical list for something else.

A webmaster accomplished the archaic form of content management, as demonstrated by the Modern American Poetry site’s first iteration, in three steps. First, he stored files in tiered folders; for example, a “Colors” folder would have included “Red” and “Blue” folders, and the “Red” folder would include “Crimson,” “Maroon,” “Burgundy,” etc. Next, he coded the webpage in HyperText Markup Language (also known as HTML code); and finally, he used a File Transfer Protocol (FTP) client to upload his information and design to the internet. It is worth noting that these three steps and all the tools described below are still sufficient to create a website, but only talent, hard work or a combination of both could result in an individual programmer creating a website with comparable features to those seen today.

The average web developer got better, quicker results with software packages made to facilitate the coding and FTP processes, like Adobe’s Dreamweaver or Microsoft’s FrontPage. Without much experience, one could create a website with functional navigation, though potentially limited visual appeal (for example, the FrontPage-driven 1999 version of the University Library website of Georgia State University, Figure 5).

Figure 5: The home page of library.gsu.edu, as captured on October 23, 1999 by the Way Back Machine
However, even after a web developer paid for these programs and learned how to use them, s/he still had to handle the hassles and expenses of “the costs for licenses, recurring upgrades, and training and additional software” (Goans, Leach and Vogel 33). Proprietary software certainly simplified website management for small, well-trained crews, but a website with numerous contributors that relied on such programs inevitably wound up with design, style, tone, font and even logo changing from page to page, creating an unprofessional look that undermined the site’s credibility.

2.2.2 Developments in Content Management and Unified Design

In the next website advancement after paid software packages, webmasters rallied their pages under the banner of one cohesive website design by employing content management systems (CMS). A CMS “emphasize(d) consistency and branding” by separating a website’s content and design, thereby allowing a group of people to contribute content without coding each page’s design individually (Seadle 5). One webmaster could designate in which folder certain content was stored and how it appeared online, and then created an interface for other contributors to use when adding their content. One example of such an interface is a Cascading Style Sheet (CSS), with which a webmaster generated one standard template for every contributor’s use (see Figure 6 for an example).
Each contributor quickly learned what to expect from the template, and easily used it even without extensive knowledge about computer code or precise instructions on formatting content. Cascading Style Sheets improved the consistency of a website’s design and navigation (Goans, Leach, and Vogel 32), while allowing web designers and content contributors to make more efficient use of their time as they produced complete websites which “look(ed) good on a computer screen, on a PDA screen, even in print” (Holzschlag).

Content management systems also allowed webmasters to implement metadata, which as mentioned above is a system of content organization that reached beyond the limitations of “file-and-folder” structures (Goans, Leach and Vogel 33). A web designer flagged certain material as “administrative,” meaning it facilitated website user accounts and contributions; “descriptive,” meaning the material labelled other content and placed it in the correct context; “structural,” meaning it contributed to the architecture or design of the website; or some combination of the three (Cornell University). When a website with a CMS employed metadata, the process of telling the site exactly what to do with each new piece of information became practically automated. Metadata also improved a site’s Search Engine Optimization (SEO), allowing people to find content most relevant to the keywords for which they search. Moreover, some webmasters
still utilize homespun content management systems written in HTML or other programming languages.

While a CMS helped a website “equalize HTML skill dependencies” between its contributors, it could not make every user’s contributions perfect for the internet as a medium (Goans, Leach, and Vogel 50). The process of designing and managing website content continued to evolve. Programmers created content management frameworks (CMF), which performed many of the same functions of CMS but could also build customized web applications (MODX). While it is certainly possible for a webmaster to build a functional website today by coding by hand, utilizing expensive software, creating a CMS or using a CMF, this is by no means an exhaustive list of the tools available for an individual interested in web design.

As poet John Donne stated, “No man is an island,” and no webmaster has to develop the structure of his or her website alone. There are numerous online communities—among them Drupal, MODX and MySQL—in which people around the country or even around the world collaborate to create customizable modules which serve as the building blocks web designers can use to create dynamic and interactive websites. Some modules affect the entirety of a site, while others run only smaller, specific functions. This “open source” approach is flexible and free, and it comes with the additional bonus of the community’s support when a programmer has a question or needs assistance.

2.2.3 The Strengths of Drupal

Brinkman chose to build the new iteration of the Modern American Poetry Site with Drupal, an open-source platform “which strives to have the strengths of both (a CMS and a CMF), without their deficiencies” (Hunter). MAPS is in good company: the many websites built on
Drupal include Louise Blouin Media Group’s ArtInfo.com and the site for the Netherlands’ Dordrechts Museum. The migration of these examples from their original content management systems well displays the strengths of Drupal.

Artinfo.com had originally run on a CMS built in the Perl programming language, and the homepage was a long stretch of nearly identical boxes of information. It was difficult to pick out different pieces of information (Figure 7, left). When the Louise Blouin Media Group “wanted a more flexible and reliable environment for their website and content management,” the digital agency Propeople migrated the site’s content to Drupal. Drupal’s modules gave their site a more interactive and user-friendly interface, a “robust content tagging system” to improve its metadata and SEO, and a seamless way to redirect website visitors from old and defunct URLs to the correct new ones (Nistor). The improvements can be seen with one look at the new homepage: its more dynamic design makes one piece of information more distinct from others, which is both visually pleasing and reflective of a clearer use of metadata (Figure 7, right).

![Figure 7: A side-by-side comparison of the homepage of Artinfo.com; as captured by the Way Back Machine in 2011, before Propeople’s intervention (left); and as captured in 2014 (right)](image)

Before Drupal, the Dordrechts Museum’s website was similarly limited. Its homepage displayed a dense menu at the top and a few highlights of information (see Figure 8, left). When
Dordrechts Museum decided to re-brand itself and make its content more accessible to the public, the museum sought to make its website more robust and interactive. The internet agency Joy Group moved Dordrechts Museum’s site to Drupal because its many modules enable each website visitor to enjoy a complex and personalized experience, including tracking one’s favorite work of art and engaging in discussions about it. The new homepage represents the improvements well, providing the user with numerous options for interaction with the site’s content in a visually distinct and appealing way (Figure 8, right).

![Figure 8: A side-by-side comparison of the homepage of the Dordrechts Museum website, as captured by the Way Back Machine in 2009, before Joy Group’s intervention (left); and as captured in 2014 (right)](image)

### 2.2.4 The MAPS of the Twenty-First Century

Drupal’s complexity and interactivity proved perfect for MAPS. When the site is finished, users will be able to view profiles of poets and schools of poetry, read relevant criticism and engage in the ongoing academic conversations about Modern American Poetry. As it is now, MAPS’
webmasters have already brought the site’s design into twenty-first-century logic. The name of
the site and its comprehensive menu still top the page, followed by a dynamic module which cycles
among featured poets and several other options for a website visitor.

The site’s vast design enhancements are only surpassed by its improvements in content
management. The old MAPS had very little flexibility for Brinkman’s institution of metadata, but
through Drupal, users of the new iteration can tag different kinds of content in multiple ways,
making the information more accessible. The new homepage features various visualizations and
applets run on metadata: a specialized search engine, an activity stream of the latest site updates,
a map of poet birthplaces and more.

The MAPS home page also features several charts (see Figure 9) which display both the
benefits of switching the site to Drupal, and the drawbacks of the metadata learning curve. The
Poet Charts for gender and race show the simple ratio of male to female poets featured on MAPS,
as well as a hint of their backgrounds. These charts are helpful, because they provide information
at a glance, but categorization can lead to limitation. Scholars interested in modern gender studies
can take issue with the fact that male poets outnumber female, or with the inability to ask every
poet on the site with what gender he or she identified or identifies. Feminist writers like Jean
Baker Miller, Adrienne Rich, Dorothy Dinnerstein and Nancy Chodorow might even disagree with
separation of male and female into different categories, as this “perniciously symbiotic
polarity...denies full humanity to both sexes while meshing - and helping to create - their neuroses”
(Kahn 827). The metadata related to race and ethnicity can be every bit as contentious. One may
ask whether race and ethnicity should be grouped together, as they often are in informal vernacular,
or if they ought to be separated. Ethnicity, which relates to national and cultural background, is
an easier category to define than race, which is less a biological fact and more a social construct.
“Race is not determined by a single gene or gene cluster” (López 965) and “the meaning-systems around race change quickly rather than slowly” (969). For better or for worse, different racial names have applied to similar subsets of the American population throughout distinct periods of history. Who has the right to label a self-proclaimed “Afro-American” poet as “African American?” Naturally, we can only provide simplifications; a thorough exploration of the roles of gender and race in modern American poetry is outside the scope of this report. The race and ethnicity chart also exposes another drawback to the current MAPS: at present, certain metadata points can be double counted—for example, if a poet is tagged as “Eastern European,” he is counted in both the Eastern European and the European categories.

![Figure 9: Two charts of MAPS metadata](image)

The Modern American Poetry Site has come a long way, but there remains a great deal of work left to do. Our project faced technical difficulties as we attempted to fill in some of the gaps, as we will discuss in detail below.
2.3 Confessional Poetry

Confessional Poetry started as a poetic movement in post-WWII twentieth-century America. Its most prevalent aspect is candid and vulnerable autobiographical matter, hence the title “Confessional.” It brings taboo subjects, such as sex, addiction, mental health and familial relationships, to the forefront (A Brief Guide to Confessional Poetry). Confessional poets use personal experiences and real situations to elicit a genuine emotional response from their audience.

Literary critic M. L. Rosenthal first used the phrase “Confessional Poetry” when reviewing Robert Lowell’s Life Studies, published in 1959. The term has since been applied to several poets, namely Lowell, Anne Sexton, Sylvia Plath and W. D. Snodgrass. In these four cases, the poets knew each other personally, and some critics argue that their works had common characteristics, such as style, subject matter, and the like. However, the Confessional Poetry movement never formed a cohesive group or definitive prerequisite.

Critical debate continues over who can and cannot be considered a “Confessional Poet.” Some argue that Plath is not necessarily Confessional, while Snodgrass and Elizabeth Bishop openly rejected the label. The movement had its origins in 1950s America, but its poetry is timeless; through the passing of time, people will still be able to write Confessional poetry.

2.3.1 The Confessional Poets: An Explanation of What Made Them Confessional

Featured on MAPS’s page of Confessional poets are Sexton, Bishop, Plath, Lowell, Theodore Roethke, James Merrill, John Berryman, and now Snodgrass. Numerous critics, from M. L. Rosenthal in the 1960's through Brian Brodhead Glaser in the 2000's, have referred to these poets' works as Confessional. Despite Snodgrass, Bishop and Lowell's outright rejection of the label, their names are nonetheless tied to the Confessional Poetry movement.
Bishop, in particular, deemed Confessional poetry “nonsense” and made her opinion very clear. She wanted very little to do with the movement, and sought to branch out with her poetic style. She cited two distinct poets as her major influences: Lowell and Marianne Moore. Moore’s poetry embodied a more conservative, “out-of-date” American style, while Lowell’s poetry incorporated history and politics to form a more large-scale take on the confessional. From this emerged Bishop’s unique writing style, described as “one that satisfies both Lowell’s ‘confessional nonsense’ and Moore’s ‘meticulous conservatism’” (Ebberson). Because of this dichotomy, it is a bit more difficult to categorize Bishop as part of one school of poetry, versus allowing her to simply write poetry however she saw fit. Because the Confessional aspect of her poetry is easily distinguishable and conclusive, it is appropriate to categorize Bishop’s poetry as Confessional, despite her qualms with the label.

By contrast, critics of Sexton’s poetry are more unanimous in her designation of Confessional. The bulk of contention over her Confessional classification is in regards to labelling poets in general, in which critics deem categorizing poets as “pigeonholing” (Anne Sexton). Her primarily autobiographical work elicits discomfort in the reader, with “explicitly bodily and female subject matter and imagery,” (George) and “her deeply personal feelings...her battles with mental illness” (Anne Sexton). As these subjects delve deeply into her psyche and manifest her candid thoughts, she will be considered a Confessional poet for our intents and purposes.

While there is much debate as to whether or not these poets should be deemed “Confessional,” critics made compelling statements for each scenario. M.L. Rosenthal in particular stated that Sylvia Plath “put...herself at the center of her poems in such a way as to make her psychological vulnerability and shame an embodiment of her civilization,” which thusly labels her as a Confessional poet (Uroff). The bulk of her poetry is seen from a first-person perspective in
which she is the storyteller, and all of her considerably taboo thoughts and emotions are relayed to
the reader. This is, in itself, the essence of a confession, and so her work may be labeled as such.
In an interview with Peter Orr in 1962, only a few years after Lowell’s *Life Studies* was published,
Plath expressed enthusiasm for Confessional poetry, stating, “I've been very excited by...this
intense breakthrough into very serious, very personal, emotional experience which I feel has been
partly taboo...These peculiar, private and taboo subjects, I feel, have been explored in recent
American poetry” (Orr). Taking into account the content and style of her work, along with the
conscious acknowledgement of the Confessional movement and appreciation of its purpose, Plath
very closely fits the label of “Confessional poet.”

Similarly, Robert Lowell, uses self-deprecation and modesty in an autobiographical
fashion to disclose “his weaknesses, his ineptitude, his misery, his inflicting of pain on others,”
while appealing to the public’s desire for discourse on taboo subjects. This, in effect, reveals
“information that is humiliating or prejudicial to himself,” which is, in essence, what makes his
style of poetry Confessional. His poetry exudes a self-accusatory nature, which makes it difficult
for the reader to pass judgment, since he has already voiced the disapproving voice one would
wish to express when reading his poetry (Uroff).

In the same vein, Snodgrass has rightfully gained the title of “Confessional poet,” as much
as this had irked him. He resented the label and did not regard his work as Confessional; however,
myriad critics have assigned him the label against his wishes. Stanley Moss, in his article featured
in the *New Republic* journal, stated that Snodgrass “ha[d] found a place for emotions felt, but
previously left without words and out of consciousness. He ha[d] identified himself with exquisite
suffering and guilt and with all those who barely manage to exist on the edge of life” (W.D.
Snodgrass). David McDuff of *Stand*, Thomas Lask of the *New York Times*, and Peter Porter of
London Magazine have all made similar statements, maintaining that Snodgrass went to great lengths to reveal his own illicit emotions through his poetry, like the other Confessional poets (W.D. Snodgrass).

2.3.2 Sylvia Plath and the Hughes Controversy

Throughout her life, Plath suffered emotional breakdowns and endured highly stressful situations, including the premature death of her father, her tumultuous marriage, and her husband’s infidelity (Hastings). Ted Hughes, whom Plath married in June 1956, was a successful and renowned poet, whose poetry she had read prior to meeting him. He had an affair with another woman, which Plath discovered this the same year she gave birth to her second child with him (Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes meet). During this same time period, she was constrained to domestic duties and taking care of the children, while still attempting to pursue her career as a poet. 1962-1963 proved to be a trying time for Plath, per Ted Hughes, as “the house making etc, the 62/63 snow and cold, the two kids exhausted her physically. Flu knocked her lower.” Not only was this time physically exhausting for her, but emotionally as well. Her ambition suffocated while she was assigned the role of “housewife.” This, coupled with her discovery of Ted Hughes’s infidelity, drove her to produce some of her best work, including highly acclaimed poems as well as her novel, The Bell Jar, but also possibly her suicide, according to some (Hastings).

After her death, Ted Hughes published her work posthumously, but first manipulated it (Hughes). Wayne Chapman, in his essay Last Respects: The Posthumous Editing of Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath, states that “the public consensus has been so damning for [Ted] Hughes,” but his editing and manipulation of Plath’s work may have been anticipated by Plath, as well as more justified than the general public assumes. Ted Hughes “conceded that one objective was to
make money from her work,” and that “his obligations...involv[ed] family interests and an ‘obligation to her’” (Chapman). Additionally, Ted Hughes acknowledged in Plath’s *The Collected Poems* that “several advisers had felt the violent contradictory feelings expressed in [her late] pieces might prove hard for the reading public to take” (Plath). His justification for manipulating Plath’s work prior to publication is at once sound yet controversial. The debate regarding whether or not he was in the right to edit and omit certain portions of Plath’s work is still thriving, with the “feminist side” arguing that Ted Hughes had no right to manipulate Plath’s poetry. The “Ted Hughes side,” however, argues that he had her best interests in mind, as well as those of his children.

In Steve Harris’s Avatar review of the restored version of *Ariel*, he takes the “feminist side,” refuting that “the old [Ted] Hughes’ argument that the earlier arrangement was done for Art’s sake” and stating that Plath’s original arrangement was very strong. Harris even claims that “if Plath’s collection was an act of literary revenge, [Ted] Hughes’ editing was an act of literary violence. He deliberately muddied the waters, blurring the impact of the collection as a whole” (Harris). By muddying the waters, Ted Hughes may have been trying to save his own public image, since her poems depicted him quite negatively. The intent he publicly stated could easily have not been his actual intent.

Furthermore, David Trinidad of Columbia College went so far as to say that “her body of work was left to him, to oversee. *She gave him her life.*” He later states that “Once Plath was dead, [Ted] Hughes's guilt kept him from discussing Plath with her own children, kept him from publishing Plath's letters and journals in their entirety,” thus delineating Ted Hughes as weak and emotionally distraught, which he then translated into such official matters as handling Plath’s estate (Trinidad). The “feminist side” essentially argues that Plath’s work was perfect in its original
arrangement, and that Ted Hughes should never have meddled with her poetry, regardless of the lucrative potential. She revealed a part of herself in her work, and left it all to Ted Hughes. He owed her the courtesy of publishing her work as it stood, and respecting that the monetary and emotional outcome that would result from its publication were both necessary and expected by her.

2.3.3 The Progression of the Plath Dialogue

From the inception of her work, there have been two major shifts in criticism of Plath’s work, marked by significant events. The first event that transformed the discussion was her death in 1963, and the second event was the restoration and republication of Ariel by Frieda Hughes in 2004. Before her death, Plath published The Colossus and The Bell Jar under her own name. All publications following these were posthumous, executed by Ted Hughes, and later on, by Frieda Hughes. The Guardian’s reviews of both works regarded them as “pleasurable” and even “sprightly.” Bernard Bergonzi commends Plath, save for the preceding misogynistic-charged statement, claiming that “the work of women poets is marked by intensity of feeling and fineness of perception rather than by outstanding technical accomplishment… Plath is, however, a young American poetess whose work is most immediately noticeable for the virtuoso qualities of its style” (Niland). There was little discussion in regards to the aspect of psychological torment which Plath experienced at the time, especially so when working on The Bell Jar.

After her death, criticism of Plath’s work was geared towards psychoanalysis, and piecing together her thoughts in order to make sense of her life. Marianne Egeland stated that “As the cause of [Plath’s] death became more widely known, the discussion [of her poetry] intensified. The high price she seemed to have paid for her art added an electrifying dimension to her poems.”
A mere six days after her death, The Observer, a renowned newspaper, published ‘A Poet’s Epitaph,’ which focused not on the cause and implications of her death, but on her “literary mystery” (Egeland). As this was so sudden a response after her death, it set the tone for further discussion on Plath. Instead of dismissing her death as a trivial celebrity death, or neglecting to reread her poetry, the public began to more thoroughly analyze Plath’s work. With the knowledge of her life’s ultimate outcome, interpreting her poetry became simpler, as all of her words were then in retrospect.

Since the restored version of Ariel’s release in 2004, conversation has shifted towards the Ted Hughes controversy, for the majority. In Steve Harris’s 2011 Avatar review of the restored version of Ariel, he states that “this restored version of Ariel will be the one that will now be studied. Hughes’ deceptive version will also be studied, but it will exist as a footnote” (Harris). This is a bold, but justifiable statement. As the restored version of Ariel contains more original poems and in the order originally intended by Plath herself, and it was released more recently than the version Ted Hughes released, academics now will likely discuss it in greater detail than the previous version. Meghan O’Rourke’s 2004 Slate review “Ariel Redux” focuses completely on the restored version of Ariel and the social implications, namely defending Ted Hughes and stating that he simply “acted like a good film editor” (O’Rourke). Craig Teicher incorporates a bit of psychoanalysis into his 2013 NPR review of The Colossus, stating that “The strange psyche at the core of these poems is made powerful by its seemingly limitless ability to endure self-destruction” (Teicher). Given the perspective of Plath’s suicide over 50 years ago, compounded with the perspective of the original Ariel, criticism of Plath’s work now focuses more closely on the poet as related to her work, rather than her work alone.
3. Methodology

The overall goal of the project was to increase usability of the Modern American Poetry Site (MAPS) by adding content to the site as efficiently but thoroughly as possible, while also providing a template that facilitates others’ contributions to the site. The best way to achieve this, we concluded, was to complete one section of the site in its entirety, thus creating the following project objectives.

1. Create a landing page for one school of poetry.
2. Migrate all content from the old to the new site for one existing poet.
3. Find and upload new content to an existing poet’s page.
4. Select a new poet to be included on MAPS, and find and upload content to the site.
5. Create a contributor’s guide that serves as a companion to our template.
6. Find and upload historical content related to a school of poetry to be featured on the landing page.

Before initiating the formulated methodology, we made executive decisions as to which school of poetry would be modified, as well as which poets upon whom to develop. Initially, we focused on the schools of poetry which contained many poets. We narrowed this selection down to three schools of poetry, all of which listed more than five poets. These included Confessional, Harlem Renaissance, and Modernist poetry. From there, the choice of one school of poetry was a matter of considering each of their individual worth in terms of academic discourse.

MAPS’s primary purpose is to spur and enhance academic discussion, and to provide a segue to further research and analysis. To promote this purpose, we resolved to select a school of poetry which sparks lively critical debate and even controversy. This led to our decision to create
a landing page for Confessional poetry, as it was still being discussed today by academic professionals, despite having origins in the 1950s.

From further research, we discovered the general disputed nature of the school, due to its debatable poetic attributes and the socially prominent poets represented in the Confessional poetry group. These specific disputes include the discord between the poets and critics, in terms of what constitutes Confessional poetry and a Confessional poet, as well as whether or not Plath is famous for her work itself, or for the sake of her suicide. These debates lead to, respectively, discussion over the validity of an artist’s self-interpretations, as well as cultural icons and whether their personal life affects the public opinions of their work (e.g. Ernest Hemingway, Elvis Presley both had famous deaths). The debates of Confessional Poetry are, at their cores, the very aesthetic questions people are driven to ask about all art, and in thinking critically about these questions, people develop their skills to analyze other actions and situations in their lives as well.

Upon selecting Confessional poetry, we decided to make changes to Sylvia Plath’s content on MAPS. Plath was labeled as a Confessional poet on the old iteration of MAPS, which presented the opportunity to streamline our contributions to the site. By keeping our project objectives and actions contained to one school of poetry, we created an example that served as a simplified walk-through for those looking to contribute to the site. All of our contributions were contained, while still thorough.

Selecting the new poet to add to MAPS was a bit more of a challenge. We sought to find a poet who fit the description of Confessional well, while still maintaining a quality of debate and discussion. Through research of Confessional poetry and the poets commonly deemed Confessional, we generated several potential poets, including Delmore Schwartz, W. D. Snodgrass, and Ted Berrigan. After considering these options, we opted to add W. D. Snodgrass
to the Confessional landing page, as he fit the description of “Confessional poet” more-so than the other poets did.

Figure 10: Our project’s methodology flowchart

Once these preliminary decisions were made, we were able to implement our project objectives and make contributions to the site. After deciding which poets upon whom to develop,
we were then able to find and select content to upload to the site, and after selecting the school of poetry upon which to develop, we were then able to more thoroughly research the background of the poetry style and the movement itself.

In order to implement our devised methodology, we first had to create user profiles that enabled us to create items on MAPS. Being that MAPS is a community-oriented website, creating a user profile in order to engage with content is preferred. As users aiming to make significant changes to the site’s content, we resolved to create accounts with “medium-level privileges,” implying that we can add content to MAPS, but we would not be allowed to make infrastructure changes to the site, as allowed with an administrative account.

The steps involved in setting up user profiles are self-explanatory, since the site outlines each step and makes the process quite clear. Much like Facebook or Wikipedia, those without user profiles are able to view content on the site, while those with user profiles are able to post items, interact with other site users, and ultimately create the dynamic of the site.

In this chapter, we define the methodology that we used in order to complete one section of MAPS, and how it would facilitate others’ contributions to the site.

3.1 Migrating Content from the Old Site to the New: Sylvia Plath

As the older iteration of the site already contained content on Plath, we decided to migrate all content from her page on the old site to her page on the new one. The bulk of the content was comprised of lengthy excerpts from publications from the 1990’s and before, which raised an important question: in the modern era of easy access to information, was there more value in keeping every word of every entry, or in shortening the excerpts into quicker reads? Our project sponsor’s preference aligned with our own. We determined that all criticism posted on the old
iteration of the site, regardless of the length or publication date, was pertinent and deserving of inclusion.

The new site had already established an interface through which users uploaded excerpted or original content, one piece at a time. Considering the quantity of works featured on the old MAPS, we first explored methods by which the site’s administrators could quickly send old content to the new site. Our research led us to two Drupal modules with apparent potential: “Migrate” and “Import HTML.” Each was designed to recognize the metadata of a source website’s code and swiftly populate the appropriate fields of a new, Drupal-based site. Unfortunately, the old MAPS’s infrastructure did not support the level of metadata necessary for Drupal’s modules to work. We thus resorted to the same method Brinkman and his team had been using all along: the standard user interface. The process was time consuming, but simple: we copied content from the old site and pasted it into the new MAPS’s online form for submitting criticism, all the while documenting the content’s publication information.

Some pieces of criticism did not contain all of the information about the publication from which they were taken. This entailed searching the internet for more information on the publications from which the criticism originated. In order to fill out the Publication form completely, we primarily sought information on the publication type (e.g. book, journal, manuscript), the authors, the publication itself (i.e. publisher, city, year, volume), and any identifiers or locators (e.g. ISBN number, URL, DOI, etc). We used the information posted on the site and augmented it by adding any missing components that were attainable. For the majority of the migrated criticism, a search through WPI’s Gordon Library Database system (Summon) or through Google Books returned most or all of the publication information necessary. Below is an example of publication information we sought and found through Google Books.
Once we found the publication information, we used the primary source’s information. For example, the print book was cited, rather than the online version; the content from the publication
originated from the print version, which is static, while online versions of the publication can proliferate to the point of excess. After entering the publication information into the form, we filled out the rest of the form as well, including the author, the title of the criticism (which defaulted to the format Author: on “Poem”), the poem, the criticism text, any tags, and the criticism target, which in this case was Sylvia Plath. All of these components besides tags are straightforward and objective. Per Brinkman’s suggestion, it is best to refrain from tagging content with any of its other identifiers listed here. All content automatically linked to its author, related poem, and criticism target metadata. Therefore, tags are best meant to relate content using subjective topics, such as themes of the content or related poem.

3.2 Creating a Landing Page for Confessional Poetry

The old MAPS did have a few pages dedicated specifically to schools of poetry--namely, Angel Island Poetry and Japanese American Concentration Camp Haiku. Otherwise, most essays and excerpts were arranged by poet. The new site allows for content related to not just one poem or poet, but a group of poets, an artistic movement or even a period in history. MAPS users have always been able to begin their activities from the landing page of a specific poet, but now, each school of poetry also has its own page. Drupal’s robust management of metadata seamlessly connects pieces of information with the same tags, so every poet categorized within a school will automatically appear on its landing page.

School of poetry landing pages on MAPS have three main tabs with which anyone can interact: View, Forum, and Tree. Members who have logged in have more options, but these refer specifically to maintenance. The View menu houses the Overview, Quotes, Timeline, Media, Activity, and Network tabs. The Forum menu houses a General Discussion board, as well as other
communication media. The Tree menu houses a hierarchical breakdown of the poets listed on the page, much like a family tree.

Since the Overview tab is the first a site user sees, we directed our primary efforts towards the Overview of Confessional Poetry. This tab shows a description of the school of poetry, details of the school, the option to share the page via social media, and the list of all the poets within that category. Our primary contribution was the school of poetry’s description. Our research had provided us with no lack of details to utilize, but we wanted to maximize the blurb’s usefulness. We decided to balance thoroughness and brevity, so we aimed for a two-paragraph description that provided a historical context of the poetic style and its movement, discussed several eminent Confessional poets, highlighted the poetry’s characteristics, and provided a present-to-future outlook on the movement. One can find the resulting blurb here, or in Section 4 of this report.

We had three other contributions specifically for the Confessional Poetry landing page. We designed a logo for the school, modeling it on a church confessional booth (Figure 15). In the course of our studies, we came across a brief description of the Confessional Poetry movement by critic Brian Brodhead Glaser, and we posted it under the Quotes tab. We also collected an expansive list of historical events related to the school of poetry, along with the date, pertinent poet, and location (where available). We will discuss the timeline in greater detail below.

Figure 13: Souza designed this logo for Confessional Poetry in Solidworks
Under Media, any audiovisual items, such as video clips, audio clips, and images are shown. In addition, a Criticism Cloud is shown, which visualizes criticism target titles according to relative frequency. The Activity tab lists any user activity, and the Network tab presents information related to the user’s social network within the site.

3.3 Augmenting the Confessional Poets with an Additional Page: W. D. Snodgrass

Once the decision was made to keep all contributions within one school of poetry, selecting a new poet to add to MAPS was a bit more straightforward. Through research of Confessional poetry and those who were involved with the movement, we were able to formulate several poets who could be considered Confessional, including Delmore Schwartz, Ted Berrigan, and W. D. Snodgrass.

While both Berrigan’s and Schwartz’s poetry exemplified Confessionalism, the social aspect of their acclaim was not as dynamic. Schwartz wrote Confessional material, but he lived and wrote before the Confessional movement began, during the late 1930’s through the 1940’s. Additionally, there was very little ongoing academic discourse about Schwartz, which detracted from the potential of catalyzing new discourse. Relatedly, there is currently very little academic discourse on Berrigan’s work, thus diminishing the potential for new academic discourse to arise (Notley). Furthermore, Ted Berrigan considered himself a “late Beat,” which left less room for critics to argue his affiliation otherwise. However, W. D. Snodgrass is presently very eminent, due in part to his social involvement with universities and his recent death in 2009. Furthermore, his work was at one point distinctly Confessional, coincidentally during the time of the movement. Many critics deemed him one of the “Big Four” in terms of Confessional poetry, implying that he assisted in its creation and proliferation, along with his collection of poems, Heart’s Needle,
published in 1959 (W. D. Snodgrass). Thus, we concluded that it was possibly an oversight that he was not included on MAPS, let alone in the Confessional poetry category. Ultimately, we selected Snodgrass to be included on MAPS due to his socially prominent nature, and the relevance of his work to the Confessional movement.

Adding his poet page to the Confessional landing page was very straightforward. As there was no bibliographical information involved in setting up Snodgrass’s page, we simply selected Create Poet from the main menu on the dashboard of MAPS, and followed the instructions thenceforth. This entailed providing his full name, along with his birth and death dates, his birth and death places, and his poetic affiliation, which in this case was Confessional. Apart from his poetic affiliation, which we had concluded from prior research, the remainder of the necessary information was all freely available on the internet, as they were objective items. All images currently on Snodgrass’s page are from .edu sites, chiefly from Old Dominion University’s website, McNeese State University’s website, and University of Delaware’s website. As he was a prominent social figure, more recent color images can be found of Snodgrass lecturing at universities, attending arts festivals, and the like.

3.4 Finding Useful New Critical Content for Plath and Snodgrass

It is easy enough for a person to navigate to any web search engine and type in a poet’s name, but the results may not be academic, relevant, or useful. The first step in selecting useful content for MAPS is finding it, and before we could do that, we had to know both what we were looking for and where to look. For the latter part, we had access to the repository of publications at the George C. Gordon Library on Worcester Polytechnic Institute’s campus. We also made liberal use of our library website’s expansive connections to academic databases, including
Academic OneFile, JSTOR and Project Muse. The MLA International Bibliography served as a useful launching point for research. In addition, web services like Google Books and the Ebrary, as well as the websites of academic journals, often provide access to the full texts of many articles or even full issues of journals. When using these various online sources, we had the best results with the most specific search terms. To illustrate: if we simply searched for the name Snodgrass, we came across such publications as “Response to Dr. Snodgrass” in the *Journal of Pediatric Urology*. Searching “W. D. Snodgrass” returned results that included interviews and news articles, and searching for his name and titles of his poems made it easier to find focused criticism.

As there is no lack of available materials from reliably academic sources, the purpose of MAPS content shifted slightly. Now, it is more useful to provide a concise excerpt from a book or journal that a reader can then access, than it is to provide a lengthy, thorough representation of an obscure work. The only remaining hurdle was deciding sources to use, once we read them. For our work with W. D. Snodgrass, there were no previous MAPS postings to consider; any discussion of his poetry’s forms, reflections on gender, psychological interpretations, etc., were open for consideration.

We were much more selective for the criticism of Sylvia Plath. In reviewing the Plath content on the old MAPS site, it became clear that while critics always discussed poetic craft, feminism and psychology in relation to her work, certain eras between her death in 1963 and the present brought different topics to the fore. For example, critics in the 1970’s made little or no distinction between the speaker of a Plath poem and the poet herself. They frequently discussed what they perceived to be Plath’s obsession with her father and subsequent subjugation to men. For example, Jon Roseblatt wrote of “the poet's fear of the stonelike, resistant force of the patriarch and her admiration for the colossal power that her father once possessed” (Roseblatt), and Rojer
Phillips described “Daddy” as “explicitly phallic” and a poetic murder of “[Plath’s] husband and all men” (Phillips). In the 1980’s, the Plath dialogue centered more around the psychological literary interpretations of Plath’s craft, especially through her use of Freudian and Jungian images and archetypes. In this and subsequent decades, critics more frequently distinguished between the writer’s mental health and her speaker’s psychiatric state, but many (such as Anne Stevenson and Alan Williamson) still freely correlated the poet’s life with the “confessions” in her poetry. Plath critics of the 1990’s developed earlier themes of the poet’s reliance on men and relationship to mental health into a discussion of how Plath utilized these foundations to craft her works of art. It was in this decade that Linda Wagner-Martin drew a connection between Plath’s carefully crafted poetry and feminism: “The mixture of comedic self-deprecation and forceful anger made [Plath’s] work a foreshadowing of the feminist writing that appeared in the later 1960s and the 1970s” (Wagner-Martin).

3.5 Selecting Useful New Critical Content for Plath and Snodgrass

As we read recent critical works about Plath and Snodgrass, we found that we judged the usefulness of these essays and articles on several criteria. The best criticism had something new to say; it developed a previous idea further, refuted an old position in favor of new one, or brought a different perspective to the poets’ works. The critical authors had to establish reasonable credibility through both their expertise and the medium in which they published. We aimed to keep our excerpts down to two paragraphs or so, in part because we only intended to make academic fair use of other authors’ works (as opposed to infringing on copyrights or petitioning for permissions) and in part because so many academic publications can now be accessed online.
Since we wanted short excerpts, we preferred articles and essays with specific, cohesive arguments instead of broad blanket statements.

We found that academic discussion of Plath still (naturally) included such topics as feminism, mental health and poetic craft; but recent critics have brought three other themes to the fore. Some critics focused on the physical body of Plath’s stories and poetry—that is to say, the literal pages of paper on which she wrote. Others developed the theme of Plath’s poetry as “confession” into Plath’s poetry as “performance.” Many critics also reevaluated the intervention of Plath’s executors over her literary estate. We found the works of Lynda K. Bundtzen, Luke Ferretter, Frieda Hughes, Jo Gill, and (in some cases) Kate Moses represent some of the best recent specimens of commentary on the works of Plath.

Plath and her husband were both working writers, so one would expect their home workspaces to be filled with typed and handwritten pages. The physical bodies of these works have drawn the attention of recent Plath critics. Plath wrote her first manuscript of *The Bell Jar* on Smith College’s pink memorandum paper, stolen from the college she had attended and loved during her time as a teacher there (Ebbets). Plath snatched up typed pages of Hughes’s work, and jotted down drafts of her poems on the backsides; Bundtzen commented on this practice in *The Other Ariel*. Bundtzen’s book revealed that in the act of writing on Hughes’s verso, Plath both engaged her husband in absent discussion and moderated a dialogue between Hughes’s works and her own. Bundtzen said it succinctly: “The friction between these two bodies is palpable at times” (8); and one can see that the phrase “these two bodies” represents not only the corpora of Hughes’s and Plath’s writings, but also their minds. Ferretter noticed another pattern in Plath’s handwritten pages: she also wrote on her own versos. Ferretter observed varying literary viewpoints expressed on opposite sides of the same literal page. For example, her short story “Home Is Where the Heart
Is” featured a wife who found fulfillment as she prepared a meal and served her husband. On the verso of drafts of this story set in a kitchen, Plath wrote drafts of “Terminal,” a poem also set in a kitchen, in which a wife was prepared as a meal and served to her husband. Ferretter argued that Plath used “fiction to portray women in control of their relationships to men, and poetry to explore the consciousness of women controlled by men, or at least by their passion for those men” (65).

Recent critics have also taken the concept of Sylvia Plath’s poetry as “Confessional” and described it as performance. We argue that the idea of performance as intrinsic to confession. Confession is an act of relaying personal information to an audience, whether that audience is a religious authority, a courtroom, a confidante, or the general public. However, Plath’s poetry has qualities of performance beyond Confession. Jo Gill wrote that Plath used “the figure of the siren, witch or goddess to convey some of the anxieties implicit in the assumption of the role of female poet and in the performance (the public articulation on paper or on stage) of the work” (Gill 77-78). Gill directed her readers to “Witch Burning” for an example. Previous academic discourse represented this address as an expression for feelings of exposure, which is certainly a valid interpretation. However, Gill forwarded the critical conversation with the viewpoint that Plath’s poems “[reduced] the emotional self-exposure of confessional writing” down to “mere entertainment” (78). In addition to Gill’s well-appointed turn of phrase, there seems to be a general consensus that Plath’s poems have the maximum effect when read aloud—that is to say, when they are performed. Plath herself was not adverse to reading them publicly. In Frieda Hughes’s introduction to *Ariel: The Restored Edition*, she described Plath’s BBC radio broadcast of several poems in 1962, and she mentioned that Plath’s opening comments on the poems were understated in order to maintain the impact of “poems that are pared down to their sharpest points of imagery and delivered with tremendous skill” (xv). Hughes also had a metaphor to describe Plath’s work
which perfectly captures the act of performance: “[Plath] put her emotions to work, each one a string to her instrument, being made to sing for her” (P.S. 12).

Ted Hughes’s editing, rearranging and publishing Plath’s works have been a hot topic of Plath criticism since 1982, when in Hughes’s foreword to Plath’s *Collected Poems* he admitted to having once withheld some from the original publication of *Ariel*. However, critical debate about Ted Hughes’s intervention reignited when his and Plath’s daughter Frieda Hughes’s published *Ariel: The Restored Edition* in 2004. Indeed, as we sought new criticism on Plath’s poetry, we sifted through numerous articles focusing on the perceived injustices that the Hughes family visited upon Plath’s legacy. Sometimes even the same critic produced some useable and some, for the purposes of our project, useless pieces of information. Take for example, Kate Moses, the author of *Wintering: A Novel of Sylvia Plath*. In Michael Lackey’s *Conversations with American Biographical Novelists*, Moses made some very insightful comments about the different narratives produced by Plath’s and Ted Hughes’s arrangements of *Ariel*. On the other hand, Moses also wrote a Salon.com article in which she blatantly accused Frieda Hughes of “wag[ing] war against ghouls, obsessives and the makers of ‘Sylvia’ (as well as novelists like me).” This duality is a perfect example of why researchers must evaluate their sources of information thoroughly: though Moses added to academic discourse through the medium of Lackey’s book, she also promoted disrespectful gossip on the website of a nonacademic journal. As we said above, the validity of a source truly does depend as much on where it was published as it does on who wrote it.

We provided the first contributions to Snodgrass’s MAPS page, so instead of analyzing the previous conversation and adding to it, we wanted to create a strong foundation on which future discourse could thrive. Since our project focused so much on Confessional Poetry, the first critical works of Snodgrass’s poetry which we sought focused on his earlier poems. His first book of
poetry, Heart’s Needle, “with its miseries of divorce and child-loss, started [Confessional Poetry]” (Hall 505), so we turned to the title poem “Heart’s Needle” for our first excerpt. Brian Brodhead Glaser made a poignant and succinct point about the relationship between “Heart’s Needle” and Snodgrass’s struggles to maintain a good relationship with his daughter despite divorcing her mother: “[Snodgrass] finds himself confined to a role in which his daughter’s alternating needs for companionship and independence, rather than his own, establish the rhythm of their relationship” (Glaser). We also excerpted from Jay Rogoff, who discussed the artistry of Snodgrass’s “Disposal” in a way that succinctly described Confessional Poetry. He explained that Snodgrass merged poetic craftsmanship with the heavier emotions of the human experience: “[Snodgrass’s poetry’s] formal elegance domesticated the worst shocks of our emotional lives, intensifying them by ironically pretending they participated in an orderly universe we could endure” (Rogoff).

Snodgrass’s poetry was not all personal, and he disagreed with being labeled as a Confessional poet. Our duty as contributors to his MAPS page was to represent more of his corpus than just its beginnings, so we also sought criticism on his famous “The Fuehrer Bunker.” This cycle of poems was first published as a work in progress in 1977, but Snodgrass continued working on it until its publication as a complete work eighteen years later. “The Fuehrer Bunker” represents Snodgrass’s mastery of poetic forms and narrative; it tells the story of the last days of Hitler’s regime through poems with different forms and different speakers. Anne Harding Woodworth analyzed the ways Snodgrass utilized poetic craftsmanship to forward plot and develop character. We felt that Woodworth’s comments about Snodgrass’s Magda Goebbels character perfectly exemplified the correlation between how Snodgrass wrote and what his writing could accomplish:

Snodgrass wisely chooses the pantoum for [Magda Goebbels’s] indecision and ambivalence. The interlocking lines of a pantoum (the second and fourth lines of a stanza become the first and third of
the next) keep the stanzas tightly related to each
other. That tightness, rather than moving the poem
meticulously from one point to another, accentuates
the deficit of action on the part of the Magda
persona. Almost every line is decasyllabic, iambic
pentameter, the strictness of which also serves to
limit the action. (242)

So, we made certain to post a short excerpt from Woodworth’s essay on Snodgrass’s MAPS
page.

Sometimes, the best way to define the qualifications of “good” instances of something is
to analyze why “bad” instances are bad. Kara Kilfoil’s “‘The child’s cry/Melts in the wall’: Frieda
Hughes and a Contemporary Reading of Sylvia Plath” serves as an excellent example of an article
from which we chose not to excerpt. Dissecting this article illustrates a valuable part of the MAPS
excerpt decision-making process. The first problem we noticed with Kilfoil’s article is that seven
of its thirteen paragraphs relied heavily on one or two long excerpts from such sources as other
critics, the screenplay of Sylvia, Frieda Hughes’s introduction to Ariel: The Restored Edition, and
even Frieda Hughes’s poem “My Mother.” From the practical standpoint, an attempt to excerpt
from an essay which makes its strongest arguments directly around other lengthy excerpts would
have resulted in an ungainly tangle of references. This would neither have done justice to the
academic work of the excerpted critics nor looked appealing on a web page. Kilfoil’s heavy
reliance on such long excerpts in a short (eleven pages, including Works Cited) essay also
weakened her credibility on the subject. Furthermore, three of Kilfoil’s excerpts and some of her
in-text quotations came from Moses’s Salon.com article mentioned above; despite the fact that
Kilfoil was published by Indiana University Northwest’s online scholarly journal Plath Profiles,
her sources we not as reliably academic. We also rejected Kilfoil’s arguments for their
sensationalistic language. Her pathos-heavy phrases included “a hysterical defense of the man
who selfishly altered, edited and omitted portions of his recently deceased wife’s masterpiece” (270), and “Frieda Hughes bastardizes Ariel yet again” (273). Kilfoil accurately described Ted Hughes’ intervention on Plath’s writings as “edited” and “omitted;” these are words he used to describe his own actions. As editing and omitting are forms of alteration, the word “altered” also applies. However, the strongly negative connotations of the word “bastardized” make the term an inflammatory and emotional attack against Frieda Hughes.

3.6 Laying the Foundations of a Contributor’s Guide

Multifaceted websites like the new MAPS can be confusing even to veteran internet users. Almost all websites now include a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page detailing how to use the site’s features. The old MAPS FAQ, which for the time being has been copied and pasted into the FAQ page of the new site, it outdated. It described a process of submitting documents as text files with submission forms, and stated that there was no way to add audio or video media to the site; these things are no longer true. However, as the new MAPS was a work in progress through the course of our project, we could not have realistically compiled a complete, new FAQ.

Instead, we decided to create a Contributor’s Guide capable of standing alone as its own document, or of informing a future effort at a thorough, up-to-date FAQ. Prior to our intervention, Brinkman had prepared a quick guide to the process of adding new criticism to the site. The guide was aimed specifically towards students of a particular class of his, and encompassed only ten steps—from logging in, to entering the body of the text. We took our cues from Brinkman’s guide, and decided on comprehensive step-by-step instructions for not only adding criticism, but every task a member of MAPS may want to accomplish. We took careful note of all the steps necessary to complete our appointed project tasks, so we could best understand how to do the things we
wanted to instruct and encourage other people to do. We assembled a document explaining how
to create and manage a MAPS account, interact with current MAPS essays and excerpts, and add
new content as well. Our results can be found in Appendix A.

Our attention to the details of MAPS processes had a secondary benefit. Every time we
encountered a technical problem with the website’s function, we reported it to Brinkman and he
resolved the issue. This lead to some frustration on our parts, as we could not immediately sign
up for accounts or tag content. However, by our interaction with the site, Brinkman was able to
quickly troubleshoot problems that otherwise might have lingered through the site’s testing phase
and into production, where the full population of MAPS users might have struggled with them.

3.7 Arranging Information for a Timeline of Confessional Poetry

A timeline featured on the landing page of the school of poetry can aid in understanding
and discussion, as it visualizes the chronology of historical events related to the poets. By this train
of thought, we only included poets within the Confessional poetry category in this timeline. In
order to make this timeline as thorough and useful as possible, we opted to include items from
poets’ personal lives as well as from their careers. This included personal historical events, such
as marriages, changes in location, suicide attempts, and the like, as well as career-related historical
events, such as publication dates, award receipts, university speeches, and related affairs.

The Timeline widget on MAPS requires a spreadsheet of historical data, with the following
information outlined for each specific event: which Confessional poet the event involves, a
description of the event itself, the year in which it happened, as well as the city in which it happened
(if applicable). The historical information for Sylvia Plath, Theodore Roethke, Robert Lowell,
Elizabeth Bishop, W. D. Snodgrass, and Anne Sexton has been added to the spreadsheet of events. However, the information is yet to be uploaded to the timeline widget on MAPS.
4. Results: A Brief Recap

Many of the results of our project are available for anyone to view online. For the Confessional Poetry landing page, we created a logo, wrote a description and added a quote (Figure 14). For Plath’s poet page, we migrated over seventy critical essays and excerpts, as well as an interview and twenty-two images (Figure 15). For the poet pages of both Plath and Snodgrass (Figure 16), we added half a dozen excerpts from the recent critical dialogue, two more quotes, and another six pictures (see Figure 16). Our Contributor’s Guide is not yet posted on the site, but readers of this report can find it in Appendix A. We also compiled a spreadsheet of historical events related to Confessional poetry. Due to technical difficulties, the timeline has not yet been created from this, but the spreadsheet we compiled can be found here, or a snippet can be found in Appendix C.

Figure 14: Confessional poetry description
Figure 15: A side-by-side comparison of Plath’s poet page on the old site (left) and the new (right).

Figure 16: W.D. Snodgrass’s poet page

We presented our work to a class studying American Literature: Modernism to the Present (WPI’s course EN2233) on Thursday, March 27, 2014. Our slideshow is available in Appendix B. This presentation afforded us one of the most immediately rewarding results of our project: we had successfully stimulated our fellow undergraduate students into academic discourse on Modern
American Poetry. We were especially fascinated by the parallels they spotted between Confessional poets’ public display of private matters and the current societal norm for people of any age or background to post about their everyday business on Facebook and Twitter. These comparisons led to several fascinating critical questions. If Plath had been born in late eighties or early nineties, would her life have followed the same path? Certainly the subject matter of her poems as they are now would not be as revolutionary as they had been then, but would her talent and genius have led to the same success? Mental health awareness and treatment have advanced dramatically since the 1960’s; would this have saved her life, or ruined her work? We will never truly know the answers to these questions, but by inspiring our peers to ask them, we have encouraged a classroom of people to think critically. Our work on MAPS can continue to prompt thought and discussion, even though our time with this project is over.
5. Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Work

The Modern American Poetry Site has vast potential for promoting literary theory. It can help students in their studies. It can provide teachers with a resource to recommend to their pupils, and with a forum for exchanging pedagogical tools, such as syllabi and assignments. MAPS can even foster interest in the academic and aesthetic aspects of an art that is closely tied to the culture of one of the world’s most influential countries. Through our work with MAPS, we have come to the conclusion that the study of modern American poetry is a rewarding experience which challenges a person’s preconceptions and hones her skills for critical thought. The possible benefits of such a mental exercise are frankly innumerable.

Though our project accomplished much for the Confessional School of Poetry, Sylvia Plath and W. D. Snodgrass pages on MAPS, the site still has room to grow. We have a few suggestions for future site contributors, encompassing both content and site functionality.

5.1 Future Content for MAPS

At present, MAPS lists twenty-one Schools of Poetry. For the Confessional School of Poetry, we completed a brief description of the movement, uploaded a quote about the school by Brian Brodhead Glaser, and added a logo. This school has room for more quotes and connections to media, so a MAPS member can add videos, images and sound clips related to Confessional Poetry. Out of the other twenty schools, the only one with any description is the World War I School of Poetry: “Poets known primarily for their involvement in, and writing about, World War I.” Future MAPS contributors can fill out these descriptions, add logos and quotes, and link more media to MAPS Schools of Poetry.
Old Plath content still outweighs new content, and Snodgrass’s page has few entries. Critics have certainly taken many different approaches to these two poets over the years--indeed, there are as many unique opinions on “Lady Lazarus” and “W. D.’s Midnight Carnival” as there are readers of these works; future contributors to these poets’ pages have fascinating intellectual paths to travel. We also recommend that MAPS contributors add newer criticism essays and excerpts for these and all other current poets’ pages. A prime example of another page of a significant poet without much critical content is Natasha Tretheway, the current Poet Laureate of the United States. The best practice for adding new critical content begins with reading what is already on MAPS. After all, one cannot intelligently join a conversation that is already in progress unless one listens first. If a contributor wants to add an excerpt of a previously published article, as opposed to an original essay, we have a few words of advice: only add what contributes something new to the ongoing conversation, evaluate the reliability of the source, and cite the original work thoroughly.

As we found in our studies, Delmore Schwartz and Ted Berrigan do not yet have pages on MAPS. Whether or not one agrees with the application of the “Confessional” title to these poets, their works still contributed to modern American poetry. We discussed many other poets during the course of this project as well, including Frederick Seidel, Kenneth Goldsmith, Valerie Martinez, and Aimee Nezhukumatathil. Each of these modern American poets has a fascinating body of work, and could well merit a page on MAPS. The second edition of the Anthology of Modern American Poetry features more poets who have not yet gotten pages on MAPS. There are certainly others as well, some of whom will easily fall into the Schools of Poetry already listed, and some whose innovative works may prompt the creation of other School of Poetry pages.
We encourage future MAPS contributors to explore poetry and critical discourse in new mediums. As for poetry, some works are now in the public domain. Librivox.org, a website in for which volunteers read public domain works aloud and provide the audio tracks for free, does house some of Walt Whitman’s poems at least. For criticism, one can turn to academic publications and websites (which we found invaluable) and trendier online magazines (whose contents were sometimes suspect); but, the internet may host hidden gems of scholarly blogs. Criticism may come in all shapes and sizes--perhaps a #AnneSexton Twitter feed may merit MAPS’s attention. MAPS also has the framework in place for forum discussions, so site members can directly engage with the content together. Whether MAPS contributors are looking for poetry, information about the poets or criticism about the poems, we hope that they will remember not to be constrained by former conventions.

We highly recommend continued work on the Contributor’s Guide, as well as a thorough site FAQ. As the site’s functionality improves, there are increasingly varied and complex ways to interact with content, and our project could not encompass all of them. Future MAPS users may seek guidance with the site’s social aspects, including interacting with other members’ profiles, expanding their social networks, and creating or joining organizations. In the past, MAPS has also hosted a variety of educational tools, such as model course syllabi, reading lists and topics for discussion. When the current educational material has been migrated to the new site, users may also want a guide or FAQ for sharing more syllabi or using MAPS in the classroom.

The MAPS timeline we created is only a beginning. An ideal end product would involve a comprehensive dynamic visualization of modern American poetry in time, with interactive filters to help a website visitor visualize the events leading up to and surrounding the time of interest. As
it currently stands, each poet’s page has a tab that shows a map powered by Google and a timeline by Simile-Widgets. The framework is there; it simply needs to be fleshed out.

5.2 Possible Improvements in MAPS Management

As our project progressed, we witnessed the growth of many other aspects of the site, including the addition of the Mission Statement and increased functionality of metadata-driven visualizations, like the pie charts on the home page. Still, we offer a few recommendations to the site administrators, in the hope that our suggestions can further improve the user experience.

There may be more useful ways to present criticism. At present, criticism is listed by the poem (or poems) to which it refers. This approach does have value: anyone wanting to know more about Plath’s “Lady Lazarus” can easily find everything MAPS has posted about that one poem. However, a site user may be interested in the chronological progression of criticism of a certain poet, or in critical works specifically related to the role one topic plays in the poet’s work. If the criticism on a poet’s page could be rearranged according to a site user’s preferred criteria, the user could more readily perceive the narrative in the criticism relevant to their approach. This approach would rely heavily on users tagging each posted critical essay or excerpt with the correct metadata.

We also recommend a few aesthetic improvements. It may be unreasonable to expect that by the time the site goes into production, everything currently labeled “to do” will be done. We suggest replacing the bland phrase “to do” with an appeal to contributors, such as, “This content does not yet exist. If you would like to contribute…” Such a change could have the dual benefit of making the site more polite, and potentially lightening the administrators’ workloads. We have noticed room for aesthetic improvement on poet pages as well: if a piece of criticism is tagged
with the titles of multiple poems, then the poem titles appear on the poet page without a space between them. We recommend adding a space and punctuation to differentiate the different poems.
Appendices

Appendix A: The MAPS Member’s Guide

Without an account

Without a MAPS account, you are still able to read the criticism and poems posted on the website, as well as access photographs and other content. You will not be able to network with MAPS members or contribute any content. The Dashboard at the top of the screen will include the options “Poetry,” “Media,” “Education,” “Community” and “About.”

Your Account

Register for an account

1. Start by navigating to http://modernamericanpoetry.org
2. Click the button that says “Register” in the upper right corner.
3. Follow the steps on the screen to create your account. This will include choosing a username, entering your name and email address, accepting the user agreement, etc.

Login to an account you’ve already created

1. Start by navigating to http://modernamericanpoetry.org
2. You can either click the “Login” button located in the upper right corner of the screen, or click the “Login” option on the right side of the dashboard.
3. Enter your username and password, as well as the CAPTCHA security code.

Note: “CAPTCHA” stands for Completely Automated Public Turing Test to Tell Computers and Humans Apart. We use it to make sure our content is generated by website members, not bots. For more information, take a look at http://www.captcha.net/

Managing your account

1. Once you have created/logged in to your account, you will have the “My Network” and “Account” Dashboard options.
2. The “My Network” option allows you to access:
   a. Your Activity Stream, which lists and provides quick links to content you have posted. You can also see your content’s latest ratings and its last updates,
   b. The Groups and Courses to which you belong,
   c. And the social networking aspects of MAPS. You can view and send messages and manage your Friends list.
3. The “Account” option allows you to manage your account settings, profile and privacy.
   a. Under the Edit Profile tab, you can
      i. Upload pictures to supplement your profile picture
ii. Write a brief biography to introduce yourself to fellow MAPS members
iii. Use a specialized widget to list certain schools of poetry, poets or poems as areas of your own expertise
iv. Display your credibility by adding your education, credentials and awards

b. Under the Account tab, you can
   i. Change your screen name or password
   ii. Update your email address
   iii. Update your name, your role (e.g., College Student), and your (optional) phone number
   iv. Upload or delete your Profile Picture—the primary one associated with your MAPS account
   v. Review your agreement to the Terms and Conditions of the website

c. Under the Bookmarks tab, you can manage bookmarks you’ve created to link you directly to MAPS content, the way you want to navigate to it. If you want to, you can organize them into different folders.

d. The Notification Settings tab allows you to change the ways MAPS notifies you about certain activities, with options including Site Notifications, Site Messages, Email messages and SMS text messages.

e. The Privacy tab allows you to select whether or not your profile is public (so your full name is visible) or private (so only your first name is used, and your account will not appear on any listings). It also allows you to control who can view your profile, send you messages, post on your wall or chat with you.

You can log out by

1. Either clicking “Log out” in the upper right corner of the screen, or
2. Hovering the mouse over the “Account” dashboard option and clicking on “Logout” when it appears.

**Interacting with content**

1. When editing content, under the Criticism Details menu, you can add tags to the related criticism (or form of media). This adds to its metadata, and increases its likelihood of showing up in various search results.
   a. It is not necessary to tag content with the title, author, or criticism target of the criticism itself. These are already incorporated into the content’s metadata.
   b. Instead, try to identify certain themes in the content that are less apparent and only manifest after reading or researching the content further.
2. Rating—TBD (requires troubleshooting)

**Adding new content**

1. Quotes—TBD (requires troubleshooting)
2. Adding Original Criticism of a Poet
   a. Hover the cursor over “Add content,” located in the upper left corner of the page, beside the Home icon. When the menu appears, click on Criticism.
b. Under General Settings, click the button beside Original Criticism. Type your name under Author, and click Add. You may enter a short biography under “Author Bio” if you wish. Enter the title of your criticism. You can choose whether your criticism undergoes a single review, or a double blind review. You must enter the name of your criticism target; if your essay is about more than one poet, consider posting it elsewhere, such as under their school of poetry. You may add the title of one or more poems which your criticism discusses; be sure to click “Add” after typing each one.

c. You have the option to add a Context for your criticism, and give it related metadata tags. The optional choices can help your criticism gain exposure by linking it to ideas, events, people and contexts related to your work.

d. When you enter the criticism text, you can apply basic formatting—including indentations, bold/italic text, quotation format and alignment.

e. At the bottom of the page, you can enter revision information to reflect updates, change the way your screen name appears on the criticism’s page, and chose whether or not to promote your work on the front page of the site.

f. Finally, click Create Criticism.

Note: In a Double Blind Peer Review, the author does not know who the reviewer is, and vice versa; thus, there is less of a possibility of positive or negative bias in the review. This technique is utilized by many journals in disciplines as varied as sociology, mathematics and neuroscience.

3. Interviews

a. Hover the cursor over “Add content,” located in the upper left corner of the page, beside the Home icon. When the menu appears, click on Interviews.

b. Under General Settings, you have a choice between Excerpted Criticism, for an interview someone else performed which you are excerpting from, or Original Criticism, for an interview you have performed. You can also include the Interview Source. For Author, enter the name of the interviewed poet. Enter the title of your criticism. You must enter the name of your criticism target; again, this should be the interviewed poet.

c. Under Interview Details, you can add tags linking the discussion to related ideas, events, people and contexts.

d. Enter the text of the interview in the box labeled “Criticism Text.”

e. At the bottom of the page, you can enter revision information to reflect updates, change the way your screen name appears on the interview’s page, and chose whether or not to promote it on the front page of the site.

f. Finally, click Save.

4. Excerpted Criticism

a. Hover the cursor over “Add content,” located in the upper left corner of the page, beside the Home icon. When the menu appears, click on Criticism.

b. Under General Settings, click the button beside Excerpted Criticism. When you select this option, a form titled “Publication” will appear underneath. If the publication source from which you are excerpting has already been used on the
site, use the search feature of this form to find it. If not, click the hyperlink to create a new publication source.

c. Creating a New Publication Source
   i. Select the type of publication source you are creating (e.g. book, journal, website, etc.)
   ii. From there, fill out each form with all information available about the publication. For example, if the excerpt is from a book, fill in the title, the author of the book, the author of the excerpt (if different from the book’s author), as much of the information under the Publication tab as possible, the publisher and city, the ISBN, and any alternate titles. DO NOT fill out the Full text tab. This will add unnecessary amounts of text to the site.
   iii. After you have completed filling out each form, select the appropriate Group visibility option. If you want all site users to see this publication information, select Public. If you only want group members to see it, select Private.
   iv. If you are making a revision to publication information, explain your revisions in the Revision log message under Revision information. Under authoring information, your username will automatically appear in the Authored by form. Under Authored on, if you want to use the date and time of form submission, leave the form blank. If not, enter the date and time at which you created this publication, using the format YYYY-MM-DD 00:00:00 -XX00, where -XX00 is the time zone offset from EST (or UTC). For example, if you were on the west coast of the United States, this value would be -0300. Under the Publishing options tab, select each option you would like to have for the publication. We suggest choosing the default selections.
   v. Click Create Biblio at the bottom of the page.

d. After you have selected the publication source, add the author of the criticism to the Author form by entering the name into the box and clicking “Add” once the author’s name appears. If there are multiple authors, you may add more than one in this same fashion. If desired, you may add a short Author Bio to the form by using a simple copy and paste method. You may choose to display the text in filtered HTML or plain text, although we suggest you select the default option of filtered HTML.

e. Under the Title form, enter the title of the excerpt, if there is one. If no title exists for the excerpted criticism, you may leave this form blank, and an automatic title will be generated with the format Author: on “Poem”.

f. Under Criticism Target, enter the name of the poet to which the criticism refers. You may also enter a school of poetry or historical event for this form. Presently, there is no capability for entering multiple criticism targets. Under Poem, list the poem to which this excerpt refers, by using the same adding method as with the Author form. You may add multiple poems.

g. You may optionally add Criticism Details, such as Contexts and Tags. Under Context, select the theme with which the excerpt most closely identifies, and then select a more categorized theme from the next form if desired. Click “Add” when you have finished selecting each context. Under Tags, you may add related
keywords. It is not necessary to tag content with Author, Criticism Target, or Poem, since all of these are already tied to the content.

h. To add the criticism text, simply use a copy and paste method under the Body form. When you enter the criticism text, you can apply basic formatting—including indentations, bold/italic text, quotation format and alignment. Again, you may choose to display this excerpt in plain text, but we suggest allowing the Text format to be the default filtered HTML.

i. The Revision information, Authoring information, and Publishing options tabs have the same functionality as mentioned previously (see 4.c.iv).

5. Adding Media
   a. Hover the cursor over “Add content,” located in the upper left corner of the page, beside the Home icon. When the menu appears, click on Image, Audio, Video, etc.
   b. Enter a unique title for the image, audio, or video, under the Title form.
   c. Click “Choose File” and select the file to upload. Then, click “Upload.”
   d. Under Category, select which type of media this file is (e.g. artwork, book cover, magazine, manuscript, etc).
      i. For images, select Image Type. If the image type is not displayed under the available options, select “Other.”
   e. Again, you may add tags to this content, keeping in mind that it is not necessary to tag the title, Parent Content, or file type.
   f. You may add the Image Source using the techniques described in steps 4.c.i-iv.
   g. Under Relationships, add the Parent Content (similar to Criticism Target), which specifies to which category this file relates. Here, you may add multiple Parent Content list items by clicking “Add another item.”
   h. Optionally, you may give a description for the file under Image (or Audio/Video) Description.
   i. Under Image Source, list the Creator of the content (i.e. the painter, musician, photographer, etc.) and click “Add.” You may only add one creator.
   j. Under Creation Date, list the date on which the content was originally created, using the format YYYY-MM-DD.
   k. Optionally, you may list the Creation Place, specifying the location name, country, city, and more.
   l. Under Source, you may optionally list the source from which the media content was taken. This is most often a website. For Source URL, give the URL of the site through which you found the media content.
   m. If you own the rights to the content, or if it is in the public domain, and you are legally allowed to post it on a nonprofit educational site, select the box next to Intellectual Property.
   n. Revision information, authoring information, and publishing options remain the same as for adding an excerpted criticism (see 4.c.iv).
Appendix B: Slides from our Presentation

Using Plath, Snodgrass and Confessional Poetry to Facilitate MAPS’s Transition from the 1990’s to the 2010’s

Sneha Shastry and Deanna Souza

Fast Facts

- Created as a companion to the first edition of Oxford University Press’s Anthology of Modern American Poetry
- Hosted by the English Department of the University of Illinois
- Publishes original criticism and excerpts of criticism published elsewhere
- Serves as an educational tool, where teachers can share syllabi, and students and researchers can gain exposure to criticism on poets and poems over time.
This screen capture of the Modern American Poetry Site represents an early design of the website.


This remained the site’s homepage through 2010.

This screen shot, dated June 15, 2011, shows some advancement in web design. The home page began to feature a menu at the top of the page, pictures which better represent the site’s content, and a link to social media (Twitter).
This screen capture is from March 22, 2014, from what we call the “Old Site.” It shows another menu option (“Submit”) and announces the upcoming new edition of the *Anthology of Modern and Contemporary American Poetry*.

MAPS is currently transitioning from the “Old Site” to a modern, dynamic and interactive website. This screen shot, taken March 25, 2014, shows one of the poet photos which cycle on the homepage.

Visitors to this new site will have many more ways to engage with criticism and fellow scholars on the topic of Modern American Poetry.
OUR IQP

- Create a landing page for a school of poetry (including logo and description)
- Migrate all the content from one existing poet’s page on the old site to that poet’s page on the new site
- Add a new poet to MAPS
- Find new content to excerpt for both the old poet and the new
- Place events important to our school of poetry into a timeline to provide historical context

• Create a user’s guide for the new website
Which School of Poetry and Poets to consider?

- Maximize the impact of our contribution by choosing a school of poetry and a poet which both already had a significant amount of content on the old site.

- One of the purposes of MAPS is to facilitate and instigate academic discourse of Modern American Poetry, so for both the poet and the school of poetry, we gravitated towards dispute.

Our intervention focused on Confessional Poetry, a movement central to the art of Post-World War II America.

Lively critical debate has surrounded this movement since M. L. Rosenthal named it in 1959, making it an excellent example of academic discourse through the decades.
The Importance of Confessional Poetry

- It brought controversial topics to the fore, including sex, addiction, mental health and familial relationships
- Confessional Poetry often draws from the artist’s own personal experiences
- Its overarching emotions encompassed negativity that poetry had often shied away from before, giving anger, fear, sadness, and helplessness the same artistic validity as was previously reserved for positivity

Some Controversies of Confessional Poetry

- W. D. Snodgrass’s book *Heart's Needle*, 1959
  - Among the first collections of poetry to be termed “Confessional”
  - Snodgrass later refused to accept the title of “Confessional Poet,” in part because his corpus did not entirely fit into the category.

- Sylvia Plath’s works: “too emotional” to be included in the school of poetry, or the quintessence of Confessionalism?
Within the Confessional school of poetry, one of the most eminent poets is Sylvia Plath.

Since her tragic death in 1963, her work and personal life have been highly publicized through posthumous publication, psychoanalysis, reinterpretation, and critical debate.

The Legacy of Sylvia Plath

- Plath worked tirelessly to publish her writings, bringing her as much prominence as her husband Ted Hughes

- She forged her personal experiences into poetry which captivated and shocked her audience

- Her works continued to gain acclaim when published posthumously by the Hughes family
Some Controversies surrounding Sylvia Plath

- Was she indeed a “Confessional Poet?”
  - Was she “too emotional” for Confessional Poetry?

- Was she a feminist martyr?

- Is her work famous for the sake of her work, or her suicide?

- Have her executors mishandled her estate?
  - Did her husband Ted Hughes assist or do a disservice to her works by editing and rearranging her poetry?
  - Did her daughter harm Plath academia by exerting tight control over copyrighted material?

Prior to 2014, the Modern American Poetry Site only listed seven poets under the Confessional school of poetry.

![Images of seven poets](image1)

John Berryman, Elizabeth Bishop, Robert Lowell, James Merrill, Sylvia Plath,

Though some of them knew each other personally, they never formed a cohesive group. Each has a distinct voice and a unique approach to poetry.

![Images of Theodore Roethke and Anne Sexton](image2)
We considered several candidates for our new poet page carefully, including Delmore Schwartz, Ted Berrigan, Frederick Seidel and W. D. Snodgrass.

We determined that it was an oversight that W. D. Snodgrass was not already represented on MAPS.

Though his later poetry veered away from Confessionalism, his earlier works were integral to the movement’s provenance.
About W. D. Snodgrass

• Poems considered Confessional include “Disposal,” about his late sister, and “Heart’s Needle,” about his relationship with his daughter.
  • These and other early poems drew from very personal experiences and exposed the poet’s negative emotions.

• He rejected the “Confessional” label, once saying in a 1973 interview: “Later I found I didn’t want to write that kind of very personal poem, and I certainly don’t want to anymore.”

• Later notable titles of his include “W. D.’s Midnight Carnival” and “The Fuehrer Bunker.”
**The Fuehrer Bunker** featured first person poems from the points of view of Adolph Hitler, members of the German High Command, and their wives and mistresses.

These poems were set during the last month that Germany was involved in World War II.

The poems are in a variety of forms and each speaker has a distinct poetic voice.

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**What Should Be Added to the Site?**

- The main purpose of MAPS is to provide a catalyst for academic discourse and critical thinking
  - Focus on adding material that will most effectively and easily provide this catalyst

- Old site was more for content that was not available elsewhere
  - New site’s purpose is to facilitate interaction and initial contact with content that may or may not be available elsewhere
Qualities of Good Criticism

- It is focused, and has a cohesive argument
  - Strongest focus is when it is about one poem

- Criticism adds something new to critical discourse
  - Should not rely heavily on other criticism; excerpt exhibits own thinking

- It makes best possible use of quotes

- Author establishes reasonable credibility

Example of a Credible Source for Criticism
Qualities of Good Excerpting

• Has bibliographical information
  • Provide enough to find the original content whenever possible

• Short enough to be considered “fair use,” no copyright infringement
  • Old site contained long excerpts because the material was not easily available anywhere else

• The most effective excerpts are focused and concise

Qualities of Good Media

• Does not infringe on copyrights
  • Going by the rationale Wikipedia uses for its images, photos that are available on the internet and used on MAPS are under fair use because MAPS does not use the images for commercial gain, and use of the image does not detract from its initial value.

• If a video or sound clip is freely available online and is from a credible source, it is under fair use to feature it on MAPS, since we are not gaining any profit from such practices.

• Examples of media already featured on the site include photos of the poet, manuscripts and drafts of poems, sound clips and videos of the poet reading poetry
Questions?

Questions for Discussion

• Was Sylvia Plath indeed a “Confessional Poet”?
  • Was she “too emotional” for Confessional Poetry?

• Was she a feminist martyr?

• Is her work famous for the sake of her work, or her suicide?

• Have her executors mishandled her estate?
  • Did her husband Ted Hughes assist or do a disservice to her works by editing and rearranging her poetry?
  • Did her daughter harm Plath academia by exerting tight control over copyrighted material?
### Appendix C: A Portion of the Spreadsheet for the Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>Published her first poem at age 8 in the Boston Herald's children's section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Boston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>Family moves to 26 Elmwood Rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wellesley, MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>Won an award for her paintings from The Scholastic Art &amp; Writing Awards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>Graduated from Bradford Senior High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wellesley, MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>First medically documented suicide attempt in late August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>Graduated from Smith College with Highest Honors in June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Northampton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>Won Glascock Prize for Two Lovers and a Beachcomber by the Real Sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>Met Ted Hughes in February in Cambridge (UK), married him in June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cambridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>Moved back to the US with Ted Hughes, taught at Smith College for ~1.5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>Moved back to Boston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>Stayed at the Yaddo artist colony with Hughes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NY state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>Moved back to UK in December with Hughes and lived in London at 3 Chalcot Sq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>Daughter Frieda is born on April 1, published The Colossus in October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>Second pregnancy ends in a miscarriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>Finished The Bell Jar in August and immediately moves to Court Green with family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>North Tawton in Devon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>Couple rented Chalcot Sq flat out to Wevill couple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>Nicholas was born in January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>Hughes began to keep bees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>Had a car accident in June, described as a suicide attempt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>Discovers Hughes had been having an affair with Assia Wevill in July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>Couple separated in September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>Returned with children to London and rented a flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23 Fitzroy Rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>Published The Colossus in America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Oxford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>Published Ariel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Oxford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>Published Daddy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Oxford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>Published Lady Lazarus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Oxford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>Published The Bell Jar under the pen name Victoria Lucas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>Passed away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>Ariel is published in US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>Published Three Women: A Monologue for Three Voices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D: Division of Labor / Authorship

During the first term of this project, Sneha Shastry’s research and written work focused on Confessional Poetry and Confessional poets. Deanna Souza’s research and written work focused on the technical aspects of website design and content management.

During the second term of this project, Souza spearheaded content migration. Both Shastry and Souza wrote the blurb for Confessional Poetry’s landing page on MAPS, and Souza designed the logo in Solidworks. Shastry took the lead for content related to W. D. Snodgrass and Souza, for Sylvia Plath; ultimately both partners contributed to work on both poets. Shastry put more time into the Timeline and Souza into the Contributor’s Guide, but again, both worked on both parts of the project.

The third and final term of this project involved preparing this report. Division of authorship is as follows:

Abstract ........................................................................................................ Sneha Shastry and Deanna Souza

Executive Summary ...................................................................................... Deanna Souza

1. Introduction .................................................................................................. Deanna Souza

2. Background .................................................................................................. Sneha Shastry

2.1 A Brief History of the Modern American Poetry Site .................................. Deanna Souza

2.2 Website Design and Content Management ................................................. Deanna Souza

2.2.1 Making and Maintaining Websites in the 1990’s ...................................... Deanna Souza

2.2.2 Developments in Content Management and Unified Design .................. Deanna Souza

2.2.3 The Strengths of Drupal ....................................................................... Deanna Souza

2.2.4 The MAPS of the Twenty-First Century ................................................. Deanna Souza
2.3 Confessional Poetry ................................................................. Sneha Shastry

2.3.1 The Confessional Poets: An Explanation of What Made Them Confessional ..Sneha Shastry

2.3.2 Sylvia Plath and the Hughes Controversy ................................Sneha Shastry

2.3.3 The Progression of the Plath Dialogue ........................................Sneha Shastry

3. Methodology ..............................................................................Sneha Shastry

3.1 Migrating Content from the Old Site to the New: Sylvia Plath...Sneha Shastry, Deanna Souza

3.2 Creating a Landing Page for Confessional Poetry ...............Deanna Souza and Sneha Shastry

3.3 Augmenting the Confessional Poets with an Additional Page: W. D. Snodgrass Sneha Shastry

3.4 Finding Useful New Critical Content for Plath and Snodgrass ............... Deanna Souza

3.5 Selecting Useful New Critical Content for Plath and Snodgrass ............... Deanna Souza

3.6 Laying the Foundations of a Contributor’s Guide ............................ Deanna Souza

3.7 Arranging Information for a Timeline of Confessional Poetry .........................Sneha Shastry

4. Results: a Brief Recap .................................................................Deanna Souza and Sneha Shastry

5. Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Work ........................Deanna Souza

5.1 Future Content for MAPS ............................................................Deanna Souza

5.2 Possible Improvements in MAPS Management ............................Deanna Souza

Appendices .........................................................................................

Appendix A: The MAPS Member’s Guide ......................................Deanna Souza and Sneha Shastry

Appendix B: Slides from our Presentation .................................Deanna Souza and Sneha Shastry

Appendix C: A Portion of the Spreadsheet for the Timeline ............Sneha Shastry
Appendix D: Division of Labor / Authorship ..............................................Sneha Shastry and Deanna Souza

Bibliography ....................................................................................................Deanna Souza and Sneha Shastry
Bibliography

Bibliography of Website Design and Content Management


Bibliography of Poetry


<http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/index.htm>.


<http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Berrigan.php>.


<http://www.iun.edu/~nwadmin/plath/vol3_Supp/Trinidad.pdf>.


**Bibliography Specific to Sylvia Plath**


<http://site.ebrary.com/>

<http://avatarreview.net/AV13/category/reviews/steve-harris-reviews-sylvia-plath>.


**Bibliography Specific to W. D. Snodgrass**


Miscellaneous Bibliography


