

OVERVIEW OF CONNEXIONS AND TIMEA*

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Abstract

This module explains the aims and approaches of TIMEA (the Travelers in the Middle East Archive) and Connexions. TIMEA is creating educational modules using the Connexions platform. "Overview of Connexions and TIMEA" is part 1 of a 5-part course that shows how to use TIMEA modules and trains authors to create new ones.

1 What is Connexions?

Connexions is an online repository and set of software tools for collaboratively developing, freely sharing, and quickly publishing educational content. The Content Commons¹ contains educational modules² that can be grouped together into larger courses³. You may freely use and reuse content under the Creative Commons⁴ "attribution" license⁵, which requires only that you cite the source. By making all content open, Connexions encourages collaboration and community-building, as scholars work together to create and use educational resources. Whereas a traditional textbook presents ideas in a fixed sequence, typically from a single discipline, Connexions allows instructors to break knowledge up into "chunks" that can be rearranged. Modules can contain links to related concepts both inside and outside of the Connexions environment, enabling students to see the relationship among ideas. Instructors can create their own custom courses drawing from the Connexions Content Commons.

Connexions advances three core principles⁶:

1) "Content should be modular and non-linear"

We learn by building on what we already know, linking together old and new knowledge. Therefore Connexions' modules focus on a key concept and can be organized in different ways, illustrating the relationships among ideas.

2) "Sharing is good"

Connexions enables authors to share their work and receive attribution for it by adopting the Creative Commons⁷ open-content licenses. Connexions is built on Open Source technologies and uses XML⁸ to ensure that content can be exchanged and used on different platforms.

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†<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>

¹<http://beta.cnx.org/content/>

²<http://beta.cnx.org/help/glossary#module>

³http://beta.cnx.org/content/browse_courses

⁴<http://creativecommons.org/>

⁵<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>

⁶<http://cnx.org/aboutus/philosophy>

⁷<http://www.creativecommons.org/>

⁸<http://cnx.org/help/glossary#xml>

3) “ Collaboration⁹ is encouraged”

Through its workgroup and communication tools, Connexions makes it easy for people to author modules jointly, suggest edits, or adapt modules for their own purposes.

Connexions serves three categories of users:

- Students, who use Connexions materials. (Of course, “students” need not be enrolled in a specific course.)
- Authors, who create Connexions modules
- Instructors, who construct courses that contain modules arranged in a particular order

Connexions has an international audience of over one million people from more than 150 countries. As of August, 2006, Connexions contains over 3000 modules and 170 courses covering topics from music to computer science to history. The TIMEA community in Connexions has contributed over 25 modules and has built 5 courses covering topics such as conducting historical research and analyzing visual culture.

For more information about Connexions, see <http://cnx.org>¹⁰

2 What is TIMEA?

The Travelers in the Middle East Archive (TIMEA) is a digital archive that focuses on Western interactions with the Middle East, particularly travel to Egypt during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. TIMEA brings together:

- Images¹¹, such as postcards and stereograph views of monuments, street scenes, people and events
- Texts,¹² including travel guides, museum catalogs, and travel narratives.
- Maps¹³, including historical maps and interactive GIS (Geographical Information Systems) maps that enable queries of geospatial information
- Research and teaching guides in Connexions that explore the research process and set archive materials in context.

Through TIMEA’s research and teaching modules, we are pursuing two related goals:

1) To improve research skills and information literacy by exploring how to conduct research, particularly in the humanities and social sciences. We use materials in the TIMEA archive as case studies to examine topics such as conducting library research projects and investigating material culture.

2) To build understanding of TIMEA resources through topics such as the history of the satirical Egyptian Red Book, the cultural significance of stereographs, and identifying and analyzing the features of the “Souvenir of Egypt,” a decorative silk.

We encourage you to join TIMEA’s efforts. To provide a framework for collaboration, TIMEA has established an online community¹⁴ in Connexions. This set of web pages contains a forum for discussing ongoing efforts, a list of TIMEA content, a description of current activities, and information about TIMEA’s objectives and approach.

There are many ways that you can contribute:

- Create new courses or modules
- Use materials as primary or supplemental texts for courses
- Review existing modules and suggest improvements¹⁵
- Translate modules into other languages

⁹<http://cnx.org/help/reference/collaboration>

¹⁰<http://cnx.org/>

¹¹<http://dspace.rice.edu/handle/123456789/3>

¹²<http://timea.rice.edu/texts.html>

¹³<http://timea.rice.edu/maps.html>

¹⁴<http://beta.cnx.org/communities/Community6>

¹⁵<http://cnx.org/content/m11817/latest/>

- Develop new examples, provide more information or otherwise enhance existing modules
- Contribute to TIMEA Community discussions and forum

Among the topics covered by TIMEA modules in Connexions are:

History through the Stereoscope: Stereoscopy and Virtual Travel¹⁶

- A Brief History of Stereographs and Stereoscopes¹⁷
- Major US Stereograph Publishers¹⁸
- Egypt through the Stereoscope: Stereography and Virtual Travel¹⁹
- Strategies and Resources for Studying Stereographs²⁰

Building up One Empire while Tearing Down Another: Scholars, Missionaries and Spies in the Ottoman Middle East²¹

Placing History: Introducing Geographic Information Systems in the Context of Current Humanities Research²²

TIMEA GIS Map Interface Tools²³

Understanding Material Culture: Deciphering the Imagery of the "Souvenir of Egypt"²⁴

- Introduction to the "Souvenir of Egypt"²⁵
- Analyzing Literary and Cultural References: Identifying the Texts in the Souvenir of Egypt²⁶
- Identifying the Flags of the Souvenir of Egypt²⁷
- Identifying Historical Figures: The Souvenir of Egypt²⁸
- Analyzing Symbols in Artifacts: The Souvenir of Egypt²⁹
- Taking the "Souvenir of Egypt" Research Project to the Next Level³⁰

Studying Political Satire: "The Egyptian Red Book"³¹

- Studying Political Satire: Introduction to "The Egyptian Red Book"³²
- Categorizing Historical Documents: What is a Red Book?³³
- Identifying Historical Figures: Putting Names to the Caricatures in "The Egyptian Red Book"³⁴
- Getting the Whole Story From "The Egyptian Red Book": General Charles Gordon in Khartoum³⁵

Conducting Historical Research: The Case of "Oriental Cairo"³⁶

- Introduction to Researching "Oriental Cairo"³⁷

¹⁶<http://cnx.org/content/col10371/latest/>

¹⁷<http://cnx.org/content/m13784/latest/>

¹⁸<http://cnx.org/content/m13786/latest/>

¹⁹<http://cnx.org/content/m13785/latest/>

²⁰<http://cnx.org/content/m13783/latest/>

²¹<http://cnx.org/content/m13674/latest/>

²²<http://cnx.org/content/m13693/latest/>

²³<http://cnx.org/content/m13863/latest/>

²⁴<http://cnx.org/content/col10301/latest/>

²⁵<http://cnx.org/content/m13018/latest/>

²⁶<http://cnx.org/content/m13016/latest/>

²⁷<http://cnx.org/content/m13028/latest/>

²⁸<http://cnx.org/content/m13017/latest/>

²⁹<http://cnx.org/content/m13029/latest/>

³⁰<http://cnx.org/content/m13057/latest/>

³¹<http://cnx.org/content/col10290/latest/>

³²<http://cnx.org/content/m12817/latest/>

³³<http://cnx.org/content/m12813/latest/>

³⁴<http://cnx.org/content/m12815/latest/>

³⁵<http://cnx.org/content/m12814/latest/>

³⁶<http://cnx.org/content/col10291/latest/>

³⁷<http://cnx.org/content/m12590/latest/>

- Researching Biography: Who is Douglas Sladen?³⁸
- Compiling a Bibliography: What else has Douglas Sladen written?³⁹
- How Does "Oriental Cairo" Compare With Similar Works?⁴⁰
- Accessing Networked Resources⁴¹
- Searching Online Catalogs⁴²
- Using Union Catalogs: WorldCat⁴³
- Borrowing Resources through Interlibrary Loan: Illiad⁴⁴ Conducting Research Using Microfiche, Microfilm and Microcard⁴⁵

Conducting Research with the British Parliamentary Papers⁴⁶

- Introduction to Conducting Research with the British Parliamentary Papers⁴⁷
- The British Parliament and its Papers⁴⁸
- Finding What You are Looking For in the British Parliamentary Papers⁴⁹

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³⁸<http://cnx.org/content/m12529/latest>

³⁹<http://cnx.org/content/m12586/latest>

⁴⁰<http://cnx.org/content/m12585/latest>

⁴¹<http://cnx.org/content/m12583/latest>

⁴²<http://cnx.org/content/m12527/latest>

⁴³<http://cnx.org/content/m12523/latest>

⁴⁴<http://cnx.org/content/m12525/latest>

⁴⁵<http://cnx.org/content/m12729/latest>

⁴⁶<http://cnx.org/content/col10289/latest>

⁴⁷<http://cnx.org/content/m12842/latest>

⁴⁸<http://cnx.org/content/m12841/latest>

⁴⁹<http://cnx.org/content/m12840/latest>

⁵⁰<http://www.imls.gov/>

⁵¹<http://citi.rice.edu/>

⁵²timea@rice.edu