

---

## Tropy: A Tool for Research Photo Management

**Stephen Murray Robertson**

srober30@gmu.edu

George Mason University, United States of America

**Abigail Mullen**

abby@lincolnmullen.com

George Mason University, United States of America

---

Tropy is a freely licensed and open-source software tool currently under development by the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media that will allow researchers to collect and organize the digital photographs they take in their research, associate metadata with those images, and export both photographs and metadata to other platforms.

Tropy is filling a critical need in the workflow of researchers who visit archives. This need for photo management has largely arisen since the widespread adoption of photographing sources in the archives instead of reading and analyzing them on-site. Postponing analysis to a later moment in the research cycle proves more difficult than most scholars anticipate: according to the ITHAKA S+R report “Supporting the Changing Research Practices of Historians” (2012), researchers now typically photograph everything they can, and then, faced with “the lack of tools or software to facilitate the process of capturing and using digital photographs for scholars,” struggle to “organize and access photographs in a constructive way after a trip.” Researchers typically depart from the archives with photographs that might include limited EXIF metadata about the image but never contain any metadata describing the imaged artifact itself. At present it is difficult if not impossible for researchers to attach such metadata to images, particularly regarding their provenance, and to organize them so that scholars can identify and find what is important to their research projects.

### With Tropy, you will be able to:

**Import.** You will be able to drag and drop one or more JPG images into Tropy. Importing will add the image files to Tropy’s internal data store, generate

thumbnails for each of the new images, and add preliminary metadata based on a template.

**Edit.** Tropy provides the core functions needed to ensure that images are adequate for your purposes; it is not intended to be a full-featured image editing software. You will be able to rotate, crop, zoom, and adjust contrast. Each image’s metadata will also be individually editable. Available fields will be supplied by customizable templates: Tropy will include generalized archive templates, based on Dublin Core and EADS; and researchers and archivists will be able to create their own templates, customized to reflect specific collections and archives. A batch-editing mode will allow users to manipulate metadata across multiple images. Tropy will also include an interface for note-taking and transcription.

**Organize.** Images will be organized via collections and/or tags, with items able to appear in multiple collections and under multiple tags. You will have many ways of finding your archival images: browsing image collections and tags via list and thumbnail modes; sorting these views using all available metadata, such as date, source archive, and title; and searching across all available metadata, including notes.

**Share.** All items stored in Tropy will be available for export both locally and to external, web-based services. Exporting a selection of items or a collection from Tropy will generate an archive file that includes image files along with their metadata in machine-readable format. You will also be able to transmit your images and metadata to external services via Tropy plugins. We will create at least three plugins spanning a range of services – Flickr, Omeka and an open-source digital asset management software (DAMS) – as well as documentation that allows users to develop their own plugins.

We anticipate a beta release of Tropy in April 2017, and a 1.0 release in September 2017.