ABERDEEN ART GALLERY AND MUSEUMS

LOCAL GOVERNMENT MUSEUM EXPANDS ACCESS TO THEIR COLLECTIONS THROUGH ONLINE SHARING

Centre Court, Aberdeen Art Gallery. Photograph by Mike Davidson.

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— JONATHAN WILSON, FORMER REGISTRAR, ABERDEEN ART GALLERY AND MUSEUMS

With increased government requirements to provide broader access to collection information, cultural institutions in the United Kingdom are rethinking their strategy on community outreach. One way in which institutions are meeting these requirements is by publishing collection information on their website. In recent years, Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums have reorganized their information and communication technology strategy. They have sought to procure an information system with web publishing capabilities to effectively manage a wide range of collections across multiple institutions and departments. The powerful solution package they selected, TMS and eMuseum, would provide extensive exposure to the virtual visitor, as well as internal staff.

OVERVIEW
- Installation of collection management system with web publishing capabilities

RETURN ON INVESTMENT
- Improved collection management
- Enhanced public access

PRODUCTS
- The Museum System (TMS)
- eMuseum

CHALLENGES

Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums embarked on a project to replace the existing legacy database with a publicly-accessible collection management system. The institutions had been experiencing an increase in demand for access to images of works in the collection, both from virtual and physical visitors. Partnered with this demand was the desire to exhibit a large and important photographic and ship plans collection. Only a fraction of this collection could ever be displayed in a traditional gallery environment.

Project Objectives:

- Publish online collections that incorporated the specialist fields of fine art, applied art, archaeology and maritime
- Train museum staff on how to customize the software to target a range of audiences and needs
- Produce custom reports
- Simply identify which records and fields should be published online from the collection management system

SOLUTION

After careful comparison of various collection management systems and web publishing applications, four finalists were chosen with Gallery Systems' TMS and eMuseum as the final choice. Gallery Systems delivered a sound project management plan for implementation, which included steps for data conversion and for automating the process of image import. Staff members were trained to use and configure TMS and eMuseum so that departments and institutions could develop custom reports and search display modes.

OUTCOME

TMS has provided Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums with a well-managed and secure environment for collection management, with the desired flexibility and reporting capability. Visitors can now access an extensive selection from the Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums collections, and can even order prints online.

eMuseum has published information online near real-time, as registrars and data entry personnel input information. The museums regularly create object packages, or 'Highlights,' in eMuseum and have cited this capability as a 'bonus' for choosing eMuseum. Jonathan Wilson, former Registrar, shared, "The museum staff was particularly pleased with the intuitive nature of the database, the IT department liked the level of local system administration and modification, and eMuseum was relatively quick and easy to make operational."