AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM

EMUSEUM HELPS AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITIES DEVELOP THEIR NATIONAL MARITIME HERITAGE

Photograph courtesy of ANMM

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> - DAINA FLETCHER, SENIOR CURATOR, ANMM

As a national collecting institution, The Australian National Maritime Museum (ANMM) promotes a broad interpretation of maritime heritage and culture through innovation, creativity and collaboration. ANMM, in association with the Sydney Heritage Fleet (SHF), wanted to provide online access to in-depth information on surviving vessels of Australian maritime significance, while also encouraging public involvement.

Although ANMM and other public institutions hold a rich collection of information on historic boats and watercraft, many more of the country's historic vessels are privately-owned and therefore unknown to the public. ANMM sought to publish online a database of information on both public and privately owned vessels—60% private, 20% on view in museums and 20% in storage. According to ANMM Senior Curator, Daina Fletcher, "The overall aim (of the project) is to promote and preserve historic vessels by emphasizing their links to their communities, both past and present."

OVERVIEW
- National Maritime Collection
- 140,000 objects and artifacts representing Australia's maritime heritage

RETURN ON INVESTMENT
- Development of a dynamic, interactive online database of existing historic vessels
- Community and museum collaboration promotes access to previously inaccessible collections

PRODUCTS
- The Museum System (TMS)
- eMuseum

CHALLENGES

ANMM aimed to create a website that would present extensive background information on vessels, including their designers and builders, classes and types, and events in which they participated.

Their project objectives were to:
• create a richly-illustrated research database for the public
• incorporate detailed maritime classification (i.e. class, type, distribution)
• provide search results with multiple viewing options
• allow the public to nominate vessels online
• increase the collection of data via public participation

SOLUTION

ANMM was already familiar with Gallery Systems' software solutions, as it uses TMS to manage its collections. A Gallery Systems Project Manager worked closely with the museum to ensure successful design and delivery of the Australian Register of Historic Vessels (ARHV). The ARHV is a custom-ized "micro-site" within the ANMM website, and presents content driven by TMS modules. TMS' Constituents module holds information for Builders, Designers and any other significant "person" related to the vessels; the Sites module relates to locations such as significant bays or rivers, while classes, types and races are classified in the Events module. eMuseum, Gallery Systems' Web publishing solution, pulls data marked for publication from all modules, providing a central location for interlinked module information. eMuseum also offers different viewing options of ARHV records, including text list, list with images, detailed view and list of images. David Payne, Project Officer, describes the process: "TMS allows us to collect and display all the information internally in a series of layers; it also connects to other related information within the ANMM collection. eMuseum then allows us to withhold confidential data and just publish the vessel's story and description, along with selected images. It is easy to enter information and to update."

OUTCOME

The recent launch of ARHV demonstrates perfectly the Australian National Maritime Museum's commitment to innovation and creativity. The website now houses 114 vessels of significance to Australian heritage and that number continues to grow. In the first month after the site's official launch, ANMM received nearly 30 new entries from private owners and regional institutions. It anticipates listing approximately 1,000 vessels within five years.

Photograph courtesy of ANMM

ANMM seeks to publish as much detail about a vessel's story as possible. While owners provide much of the information about their vessels, ANMM fills in the gaps, using its own material from books, official ships registers, newspapers and magazines. The museum's collection of images and photo albums can further illustrate a vessel's account. In the case of ARHV, TMS and eMuseum supply the technology, while ANMM and the public supply the stories.

NOMINATE YOUR VESSEL

Visitors to the ARHV site can nominate a boat online. Gallery Systems built a custom four-page online version of ANMM's vessel nomination form, which allows users to specify detailed information on the condition of the nominated vessels, including prior ownership, and construction and materials. When a user submits the form online, a copy is saved as a PDF on the museum's server, while a copy of the information is emailed to the ARHV administrator. The vessel is then entered into TMS. If the nomination is accepted, it is marked for publication and the vessel joins the ARHV. Online information is refreshed every two weeks.