

LOUISIANA STATE MUSEUM

CENTRALIZING COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT ACROSS MULTIPLE MUSEUMS



Photo: Jay Rosenblatt.

With nine separate sites, the Louisiana State Museum (LSM) is one of the premier heritage destinations in the Bayou State, holding artifacts and artworks that showcase the state's cultural diversity and storied history. To streamline internal operations, the LSM recently made significant changes to the management of its immense, 500,000-object collection, spread across multiple locations including heritage museums in New Orleans and Baton Rouge.

Streamlining collections management within a single institution can be challenging, let alone organizing nine independent museums located in different parts of the state. As long-time TMS users, the collections management team opted to upgrade to TMS Collections, while simultaneously adopting TMS Media Studio, Gallery Systems' digital asset management system (DAMS), and transferring its hosting to the cloud.

This ambitious undertaking achieved its core objectives: improving and consolidating collections management across nine museums. Gallery Systems spoke with Kira Kikla, Registrar and Digital Initiatives Manager at the LSM, to learn more about the institution's implementation process and adaptation to its new system.

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KIRA KIKLA, REGISTRAR & DIGITAL INITIATIVES MANAGER,
LOUISIANA STATE MUSEUM



OVERVIEW

- Over 500,000 objects preserving the state of Louisiana's history and culture, stewarded by an interconnected network of nine museums



RETURN ON INVESTMENT

- Implemented a single, cohesive collections management system across nine museums
- Centralized collections data and eliminated the need for secondary software
- Redistributed workload by increasing staff skillset through user training sessions



PRODUCTS

- TMS Collections
- TMS Media Studio
- Managed Hosting

OBJECTIVES

At the Louisiana State Museum, creating a cohesive collections management structure for nine separate sites came with plenty of challenges. Each museum was handling its collections separately, resulting in inefficient communication between staff and across museums. Kira explains, "Staff were mostly working in Microsoft Word and Excel, and then storing documents in shared folders." To improve staff effectiveness, they needed a way to standardize workflows and centralize information.

Because of the disparate workflows, not all the collections data was making its way into TMS. "The TMS database wasn't being used to its full capacity," Kira says, "There wasn't a baseline of knowledge between

staff—only a handful of people knew the software relatively well. So, if there was time during a workday, those team members would input data into TMS."

Across the Louisiana State Museum's nine sites, internal change was needed to balance the workload, eliminate duplicate data entry, and centralize and streamline collections management. "I wanted to create a more user-friendly structure, so more staff could use the collections management system and the majority of the data entry wouldn't fall on two or three people," explains Kira. All together, 26 LSM staff members have access to the database.



Photo: Maggie Heller-Miles



Costume, worn by Patricia Culpepper Schiffbauer as Maid in Krewe of Iris ball, 1967.
Photo: Louisiana State Museum

SOLUTION

Before opting to transition from TMS to TMS Collections, the Louisiana State Museum explored all options. “We were initially thinking of upgrading to the latest version of TMS,” Kira relays, “But after talking to Gallery Systems and receiving demonstrations of TMS Collections, we realized that TMS Collections would better fit our needs.”

TMS Collections was chosen for its ease-of-use and versatile features, making the web-based software approachable for new users, while offering the robust functionality needed to manage multiple museums. To further strengthen operations, the LSM team also decided to implement TMS Media Studio as its Digital Asset Management System and repository for high resolution images.

For additional IT support, Louisiana State Museum—which had previously hosted TMS on its own servers—opted for Gallery Systems’ Managed Hosting services. Kira explained why this decision was impactful:

“We have a really small staff. I am the TMS database administrator and we have one IT technologist. Transitioning our software to be hosted in the cloud has been extremely helpful at redistributing and lightening our workflow.”

To familiarize the staff with TMS Collections and Media Studio, key users received training over video conferencing. “I liked being able to see what was happening on Zoom during the training, while also clicking around in the software—you need to be able to try things to learn them,” Kira adds, “We were able to comfortably ask questions about TMS Collections and bounce around ideas on how to implement new features for particular projects and departments.”



OUTCOMES

With more staff using the collections software than ever before, these changes at the Louisiana State Museum have already had a wide impact. “There is a learning curve with transitioning to a brand-new collections management system,” Kira explains. “But TMS Collections is very intuitive and easy to navigate. Staff are happy with how much time is saved by its consolidated search functions and batch updating feature. I love all the updates—they make my life so much easier.”

TMS Media Studio has also offered significant benefits, particularly with organizing reproduction requests. “All of the requests are now appearing in one place,” Kira says, making it simple for her to arrange and complete media-related tasks.

Kira is also in the process of transferring all high-resolution images into the Gallery Systems Managed Hosting cloud environment: “Currently, they are spread out over 10 different internal servers.” While that project is ongoing, the DAMS is providing a one-stop media depot for the social media manager, with photos of the correct size and resolution to promote the Museum online.

Pleased with the overall experience, Kira shares how Gallery Systems helped during the implementation. “I love Gallery Systems. I don’t come from an IT background and Gallery Systems was very clear in communicating each step of the process.”

After completing the software installation and training, that support remains consistent: “Whenever I open help desk tickets in the Gallery Systems Community, I always receive quick and informative responses, and it’s easy for Gallery Systems staff to access our database remotely and provide helpful feedback.”



Grand Plaza of Mexico City During the Occupation of Mexico City, September 15, 1847, 1847. Pietro Gualdi. Photo: Louisiana State Museum



FUTURE

As its next step forward, the Louisiana State Museum is using TMS Collections to complete a large-scale deaccessioning project. “As a 120-year-old institution, our collection has grown to about half a million objects and not all are relevant to our mission,” Kira relays. “TMS Collections’ features are helping with the active review process and saving us a ton of time.”

Kira also plans to continue modernizing the Museum’s collections management processes: “I really hope we will install Wi-Fi in more of our buildings, so we can start using TMS Collections on tablets. That way, we can view and update our database from anywhere inside the museums.”