

SOUTHWARK CULTURE & HERITAGE SERVICES

LOCAL GOVERNMENT MUSEUM EXPANDS ACCESS TO THEIR COLLECTIONS THROUGH ONLINE SHARING



Southwark's Cuming Museum. Photograph by Jody Kingslett

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, the London Borough of Southwark Culture & Heritage Services have reorganized their information and communication technology strategy. They 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.

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- CATHERINE HAMILTON, COLLECTIONS AND MUSEUMS MANAGER, SOUTHWARK CULTURE & HERITAGE SERVICES

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

The aim of Southwark Culture & Heritage Services was to replace its paper-based system of object cataloguing with a robust collection management system, and to publish collection information to a dynamic website.

Project Objectives:

- Increase access to collections allow the public to search all collections simultaneously (e.g. search all material that relates to a certain area of Southwark)
- Enable staff at all sites to access and search collections, saving time and reducing damage by excessive object handling
- Implement conservation processes, particularly for the historic photographs
- Manage and publish objects across a diverse group of collections
- Integrate data with other systems

SOLUTION

After initial research, followed by proposal comparison, demonstrations and final interviews among different vendors, Southwark Culture & Heritage Services made its decision. Gallery Systems' TMS and eMuseum were selected as the best solution package to meet Southwark's complex collection management and web publishing needs. TMS' open architecture was a significant advantage, as it allowed the institutions to integrate collection data with other management systems. eMuseum's ability to match the look and feel of Southwark Culture & Heritage Services' existing website was an added benefit, as was its W3C compliance of Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), level AA.

OUTCOME

TMS and eMuseum have significantly improved the way that Southwark Culture & Heritage Services archives, manages, and shares its collections. Catherine Hamilton, Collections and Museums Manager, states, "For making our collections accessible to the staff and the public, the systems have really helped." She goes on to share, "For managing the museum collection, the system has transformed the way we work, particularly for planning/managing exhibitions, object movement locations, and speeding up our work by way of having images of objects available at our desks. [Object data management] previously meant an hour or so [of going] up staircases to our stores. Our art collection is currently in storage—we don't have a gallery for its display—so having somewhere available where the public can access our collection is extremely important."

eMuseum allowed the public to discover works that are contained in a storage facility, thereby further broadening Southwark's scope of exhibiting its works. Additionally, eMuseum provides Southwark institutions a chance to interact with their community and understand their interests through the application's 'My Collections' feature. 'My Collections' allows online visitors the opportunity to build their own gallery of favorite works.