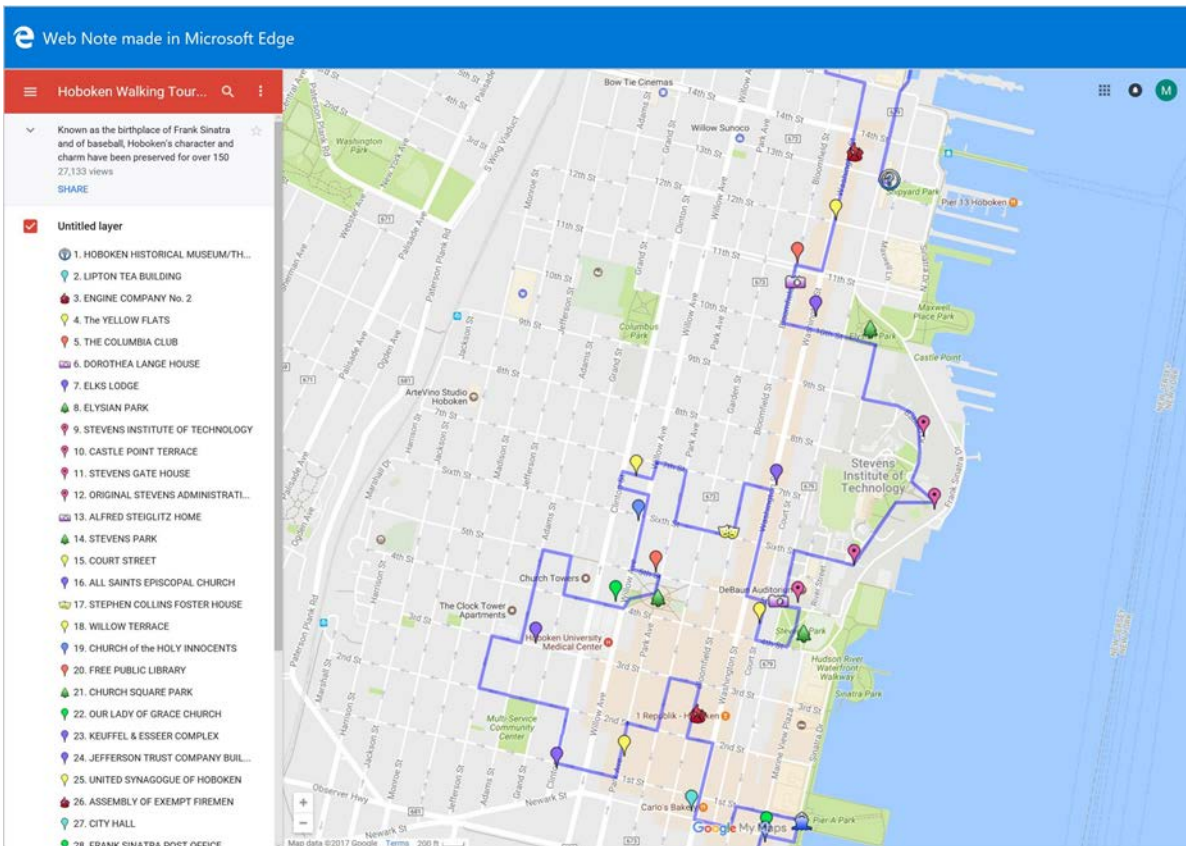


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LIS 258
Museum/Partner Observation

Blending of Digital and Physical at the Hoboken Museum

Having the ability as an institution to provide a digital aspect to the physical experience of looking through a museum is the next step towards bringing more connectivity between the visitor and the institution. Allowing the visitor to be able to explore their own path in examining a physical collection while maintaining a digital interaction as they go along creates environments of self-discovery and learning, all the while keeping the information provided by the museum close at hand. As to be expected, in the current state of museum digital development and interaction, some institutions are more further along than others, and have more in place currently. However, this is a sustainable practice that will be considered standard for the entertainment and interest level of visitors to come.

At the Hoboken Historical Museum (HHM) they are on the lower end of the digital inclusion environment, when it comes to its use and development. Dealing with a visitor demographic that may not be as easily used to in-house interactive technologies as would be seen with visitors to other, larger museums, HHM is currently maintaining its physical space with exhibits and programs, as well as providing updated material to its digital spaces on their website and social media. The one program that is provided by the HHM that would be considered a blend of the digital and physical environment is their “Hoboken Self-Guided Walking Tour” that they have through the city of Hoboken. From the museum’s website, visitors can be directed to an interactive Google map that provides a pre-determined path that people can use to walk through the downtown area, beginning at the museum and ending at the local light rail station. At each stop along the route, the individual using the map from their phone or device can read a short description about the place or location and what make it special for the city and the museum. Unfortunately, there is no direct links in these individual sections back to any of the museum’s past exhibits or possible archive collections, this perhaps being the next step needed to bring individuals using this interactive program back to the museum for a closer look at some materials that have connections to what they see around the city.



Screenshot of Hoboken Walking Tour. <https://www.hobokenmuseum.org/self-guided-walking-tours/2011-09-30-17-33-08/hoboken-walking-tour-map>

Within the HHM, at the moment, there is not much of a digital interface with visitors as they examine the current exhibitions. All material that is shared in the physical space is not connected back to any extended collection that may be online, and none of the materials shown provide any connections to the digital archive that is provided on their website. This is not to insinuate that the museum is possibly stubborn towards the growing use of technology in the physical museum space, it most likely a directional focus on using modalities such as photos, movies, brochures and items to provide a “since of inclusiveness and interconnection for the entire exhibition and total visitor population” (Serrell, 2015, 142). Perhaps when the visiting public is comfortable with the consistent use of digital programs that assist physical exhibitions, then new technology can be introduced there incrementally. HHM has not been hesitant to include digital technology into the exhibits themselves to help provide a better experience

overall, so I am willing to believe that there will be a point where the museum will be able to provide a digital in-house interactive experience in examining the museum as a whole.

The use of interactive digital programs in museums can be the platform needed to open up the other areas of an institution to the public. Being able to look at displayed objects, getting information not just about the piece itself, but about related pieces in the archived collections, or about related books in the museum's library, or about other exhibits or collections similar to this object in the area. That level of inter-connectivity could keep all institutional areas relevant to the visitors that come and extend interest in collection materials for longer periods, as individuals looking at other institution's collections could come to look at this held material as well, having been suggested to do so from the digital interactive programs that they were using elsewhere. Will the Hoboken Historical Museum be able to get to that level of digital interaction? that remains to be seen, but at the moment, this interactive map is a good first step towards that process.

Bibliography

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