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LIS 258

Museum-Partner Observation Two

The National Museum of Civil War Medicine (NMCWM) currently offers several digital methods of viewing collection items. These are important because they both provide access to patrons that may not be able to visit the museum and entice new patrons to visit. For example, the NMCWM currently has a page on their website titled “Artifacts Unpacked”. The purpose of this page is to share some of the most notable collection objects online. Each link to a collection or artifact is connected to a blog post that gives an in-depth history of the object. For instance, the “Private John Northrop Diary” links to a blog post that provides an overview of John Northrop’s life.



Screenshot of the “Artifacts Unpacked” site page.

The screenshot shows the website for the National Museum of Civil War Medicine. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the museum's name and a 'SUPPORT' button. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with links for 'VISIT', 'DISCOVER', 'EVENTS & PROGRAMS', and 'SHOP', along with a search bar. The main content area features a breadcrumb trail: 'Home » Discover » Museum Publications » Surgeon's Call » Private John Northrop Diary'. The title of the blog post is 'Private John Northrop Diary', posted on June 15th, 2016. The sub-header is '103rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry' by Kate McDaniel. A quote indicates the post was originally published in the Surgeon's Call, Volume 21, No. 1. The text describes the 103rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry's role in the summer of 1862. A 'QUICK LINKS' sidebar on the right includes buttons for 'PLAN YOUR VISIT', 'GROUP TOUR', 'SUPPORT THE Museum', and 'LEARN ONLINE', along with social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, RSS, YouTube, and a cartoon character.

Screenshot of the “Private John Northrop Diary” blog post.

Another way that the NMCWM attempts to combine the physical and digital museum worlds is by hosting a blog that is regularly updated. This blog contains posts on various topics related to the Civil War and Civil War medicine. The posts seem geared more toward a millennial audience, as they tend to often make pop culture references and, though well-written, are structured very casually and, seemingly, for a younger audience. This is important to note because it is a way that the NMCWM is using technology to reach out to new potential patrons in a younger demographic.

Finally, one of the most popular features on the NMCWM website is the “Digital Exhibit” page. This page currently offers two interactive features: one is an interactive map showing what Civil War soldiers carried on them while travelling and the other is an interactive map of Civil War soldier clothing. Both are fun, easy to use features.

Screenshot of the NMCWM blog.

Screenshot of interactive map on “Digital Exhibit” page.

Though the NMCWM website has a lot to offer, the physical museum, unfortunately, does not incorporate much technology. Most of the physical exhibits have not been updated in a

very long time and, thus, are completely absent of any modern technology. I find this a little disheartening because I, personally, almost always go to a museum's website before visiting the physical location. The website for the NMCWM is regularly updated and well-maintained. This gives me the impression that the physical museum would be just as technologically up-to-date. Yet, this is not the case.

Finally, I do think that "iBeacon" technology is a great idea. Though Browne does report a lot of initial troubleshooting with the technology (2014), once the technology is mastered it will be a great way to encourage interaction and advance customer service in museums. I think this technology will be particularly useful in very large museums, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art. I can recount several times where I have been lost in a very large museum and have been unable to find a service kiosk for help. The use of this device will eliminate that problem. Essentially the use of iBeacon is novel because it uses technology to make the physical museum visit more accessible.

References

Browne, J. (2014). *Positioning visitors with iBeacon*. Retrieved from

<https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/community/blogosphere/2014/10/14/positioning-visitors-with-ibeacons/>