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LIS 258

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## Museum Observation 3:

### Walt Whitman Birthplace State Historic Site and Interpretive Center

#### NMC Horizon Report

As museums and other cultural heritage institutions implement various technologies both on- and offsite, these institutions must consider what that means for the privacy of their users. The 2016 NMC Horizon Report states, "Museums have an increasing responsibility to communicate and initiate public dialog on the issues that surround privacy, empowering people to make educated decisions about the digital tools they leverage."<sup>1</sup> It is up to the museums to understand the ways in which the technologies they implement function and the type of user data these technologies collect. The institution must decide what user information is relevant to the function of the implemented technology and what information can be omitted. The museum must then properly communicate to the user the information that will be collected on the user and allow the user to opt in or out. Institutions are also responsible for informing the user that "[t]o participate in online information exchanges, users must trust third-party platforms with sensitive information, creating more opportunities for it to be compromised."<sup>2</sup>

#### Walt Whitman Birthplace State Historic Center and Interpretive Site

The most on-site user technology at the State Historic Site and Interpretive Center is the availability of a public Wi-Fi network. The WWBA has a sign posted behind the register that shows the Wi-Fi network name and password. Since this is a public network, there is no protection and while it can be assumed that most people using public Wi-Fi understand this, it might be nice for the organization to have a brief statement about this on the sign.

Most of the technology that can be accessed by users occurs on the website [waltwhitman.org](http://waltwhitman.org). Online you can shop and donate (via PayPal) and sign up for their email list. The main navigation bar of the [waltwhitman.org](http://waltwhitman.org) website features links to pages where you can "Join & Donate" and "Shop."

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<sup>1</sup> "Privacy Concerns." 2016. *NMC Horizon Report: 2016 Museum Edition*: 33.

<sup>2</sup> "Privacy Concerns." 2016. *NMC Horizon Report: 2016 Museum Edition*: 32.



Screenshot of main navigation on homepage of waltwhitman.org

The homepage also features a quick access “Donate” link that functions the same way as the “Donate” link on the “Join & Donate” page. When the user clicks on the yellow “Donate” button, they are linked to a PayPal page that gives the option to “Donate with PayPal” or “Donate with a Debit or Credit Card.” Regardless of the payment option the user selects, the payments go through the PayPal system and all users have the option to “View PayPal policies and your payment method rights.” Using PayPal as the payment platform is an easy way to keep user bank account/credit card information protected from theft because the platform is equipped to do so. The 2016 NMC Horizon Report states, “Museums and cultural organizations often work with third-party companies and vendors to provide necessary services, giving them control of data security. Service Systems Associates, a company that designs and runs gift shops for cultural institutions, recently suffered an attack from malware that scooped up customer credit card information from 10 zoos and science centers across the US.”<sup>3</sup> The report draws attention to the fact that a third-party system, as previously stated, leaves “more opportunities for it to be compromised.”<sup>4</sup> However, it does offer a level of protection that the institution would not be able to provide on their own and PayPal provides the user with a link the view their policies before submitting payment through their platform.

**SUPPORT THE WALT WHITMAN BIRTHPLACE STATE HISTORIC SITE AND INTERPRETIVE CENTER TODAY! DONATE TO WWBA**

Your donation will support our ongoing literacy programs and help us to continue serving the local and national community with our historic tours, lively literary programs, and engaging family events.

**Donate**



Or, feel free to write a check to *Walt Whitman Birthplace Association* and mail to us at:

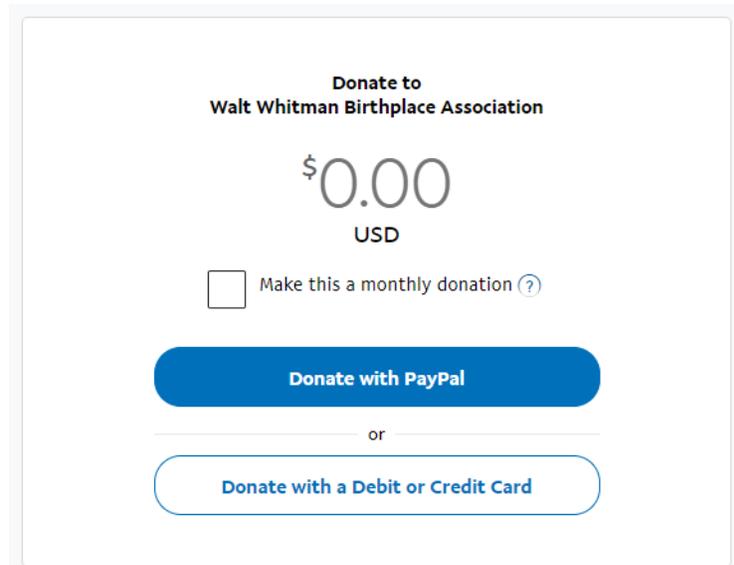
Walt Whitman Birthplace State Historic Site  
246 Old Walt Whitman Road  
Huntington Station, NY 11746-4148



Screenshot of “Join & Donate” page on waltwhitman.org

<sup>3</sup> “Privacy Concerns.” 2016. *NMC Horizon Report: 2016 Museum Edition*: 33.

<sup>4</sup> “Privacy Concerns.” 2016. *NMC Horizon Report: 2016 Museum Edition*: 32.



*Screenshot of PayPal donation on waltwhitman.org*

If the user wishes to make any sort of purchase on the website whether it is the purchase of a ticket to an event or an item from the gift shop, the user has the option to checkout with PayPal or pay directly through the website. Like the “Donate” button, regardless of how the user chooses to pay, all transactions occur through PayPal.

### Cart totals

<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	\$10.00
<b>TAX (ESTIMATED FOR THE UNITED STATES (US))</b>	\$0.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$10.00</b>



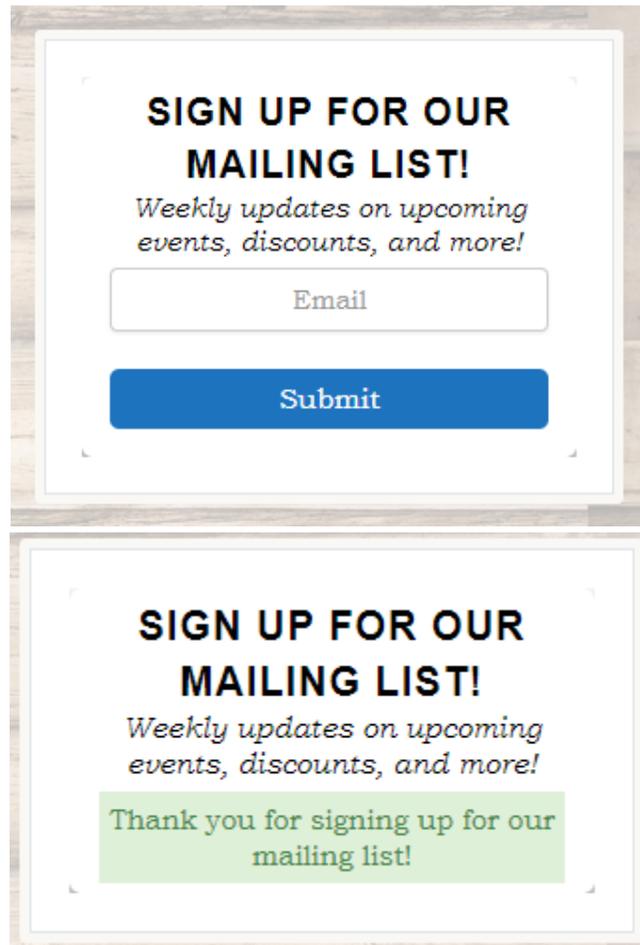
— or —



*Screenshot of shopping cart on waltwhitman.org*

Aside from purchases and donations, users are able to sign up for the email list. The only information needed to join the mailing list is the user’s email address. While this does not contain the type of information that an online payment does, hackers can still use something as

simple as an email address to gain information on the owner of that address. Unfortunately, there does not seem to be any security to protect the user emails. When the user enters an email address in the box provided, a thank you message is shown and the information does not appear to be sent through a secured platform. If the website does secure this information, it would be helpful to let the user know this before an email is submitted.



*Screenshots of mailing list widget on homepage of waltwhitman.org*

Finally, the WWBA displays a copyright notice at the foot of each page on their website in order to protect themselves from infringement.

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*Screenshot of copyright on waltwhitman.org*

## References

- "Privacy Concerns." 2016. NMC Horizon Report: 2016 Museum Edition: 32-33.  
<http://cdn.nmc.org/media/2016-nmc-horizon-report-museum-EN.pdf>
- Walt Whitman Birthplace Association Website. n.d. <http://waltwhitman.org/>.