ANDERSON: MUSEUM-PARTNER OBSERVATION ASSIGNMENT TWO

Christopher Anderson
LIS 258: Museum Informatics – Dr. Angel
Website Link: http://info-matic.org/?p=1317&preview=true
Spring 2018

Introduction

During the course of this semester, I have partnered with the Holocaust Memorial &
Tolerance Center of Nassau County ("HMTC") to gain a deeper understanding of how a museum
organizes and presents museum objects and exhibits to create a unique and impactful user
experience. In order to engage with visitors, museums must deploy digital strategies utilizing
"multiple channels of technologies that provide unique opportunities for audience engagement."[1]
An engaging and seamless digital strategy encompasses the following principles: audience
centered; sustainable and scalable; entrepreneurial and innovative; open, reusable, and sharable;
and embedded across the organization.[2] With these principles in mind, this paper will review
how the HMTC blends its physical collection together with digital resources.

Approach to Interactivity

In order to implement an effective digital strategy a museum is required to understand its
audience and create exhibits that meet audience needs and make use of appropriate technologies
that can be accessed by all visitors.[3] The strategy must be sustainable and "built for the long-term
and growth."[4] Due to the constantly developing nature of technology, any strategy must "respond
to the rapidly evolving technology landscape through experimentation that informs future
initiatives."[5] Museums have a primary goal of furthering knowledge and an obligation to
implement digital strategies that "promote content reuse through partnerships."[6] Finally, the
digital strategy needs to be included in "the development process for all initiatives."[7] While a
written digital strategy is important, information professionals have an obligation to create
collections and exhibits that seamlessly blend the physical and digital worlds.

Blending Physical and Digital Worlds

Museums can blend the physical and digital worlds by using technology to create personalized experiences for visitors. At the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, visitors can enter their interests and preferences into an app, which will respond "by personalizing virtual and face-to-face tours."[8] This is an example of how information professionals can blend the physical and digital worlds in order to reach visitors both remotely and within the physical museum. Similarly, the Acropolis Museum in Greece and the Cité de l'espace in France utilize an app "which uses personalized information from survey data to generate customized stories that guide visitors through the galleries with augmented reality and gamification features."[9] Furthermore, "after visits, patrons have the opportunity to share artifacts they created within the stories on the museum websites."[10]

These museums have implemented digital strategies that break down the barriers between the physical and digital worlds while at the same time presenting visitors with unique and individually crafted museum experiences. The technologies employed by these museums create engaging digital strategies that: meet the needs of individual audience members; are sustainable in the long-term; respond to a changing technological landscape; further knowledge and create a unique partnership with visitors (especially when visitors can share stories on the museum website); and can be used in the development of future projects.[11] The information professionals at these museums have provided a solid example of how to blend the digital and physicals worlds when creating exhibits.

Partner Museum Interactivity

Currently the HMTC does not have any exhibits available online and does not provide the virtual/augmented reality features discussed in the above section. However, the HMTC does

offer some unique opportunities for visitors to engage with the museum in an online environment. Specifically, the HMTC does offer live-streams of significant events such as the activities in conjunction with the annual "March for the Living."[12] These live-streams provide visitors an opportunity to reflect upon the Holocaust and consider its continuing lessons in modern society.
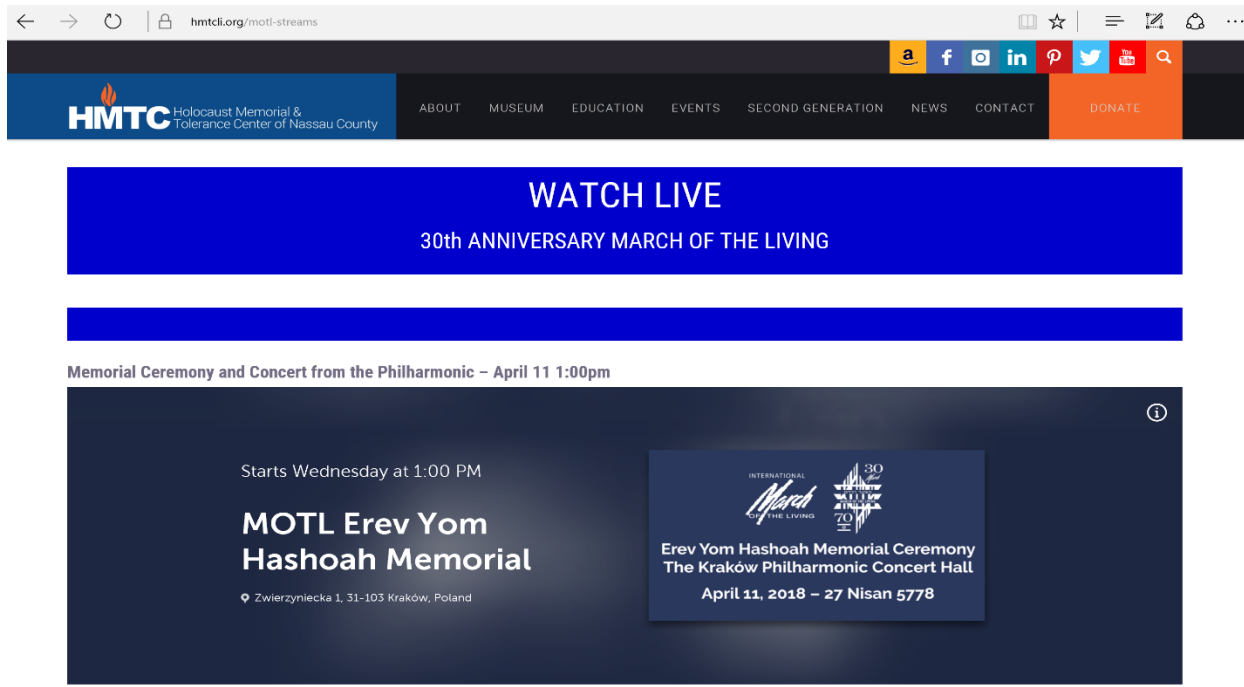
Screenshot of [March of the Living](#) page.

In addition, the HMTC permanent exhibit blends a mixture of audio, video, text, and guided learning to enhance the visitor experience. Visitors can watch video testimonials of Holocaust survivors recounting their experiences and can also join a guided tour where knowledgeable guides provide further in-depth perspective and insight regarding the exhibits. Furthermore, the HMTC provides educational programs that can be accessed either on-site, off-site or through video-conferencing.[13] Providing educational programs on-site, off-site, and through videoconferencing are additional methods for the HMTC to interact both physically and remotely with visitors/patrons.

Screenshot of Student Programs page.

The HMTC also maintains a YouTube page that contains videos relating to the museum's mission and exhibits. The page offers videos with interviews of Holocaust survivors, presentations on topics related to the museum's mission, and testimonials from museum visitors.[14] These videos help provide additional insight and context regarding the museum's exhibits.

Screenshot of Tolerance Center YouTube page.

Through a mixture of immersive exhibits, on-site and remote access educational programs, and digital media, the HMTC blends both physical and digital resources to create unique experiences for visitors. While the HMTC does a nice job interacting with the public, there is always the opportunity to provide additional interactive experiences such as those offered by the Rijksmuseum, the Acropolis Museum, and the Cité de l'espace.

Museum-Partner Object

Throughout this semester, I have been examining a museum object from the HMTC and exploring how the object could function in a more interactive environment. The museum object I selected is a child's shoe found at Auschwitz-Birkenau and is part of the museum's permanent exhibit. At the museum, the shoe is accompanied by text and a photographic image.
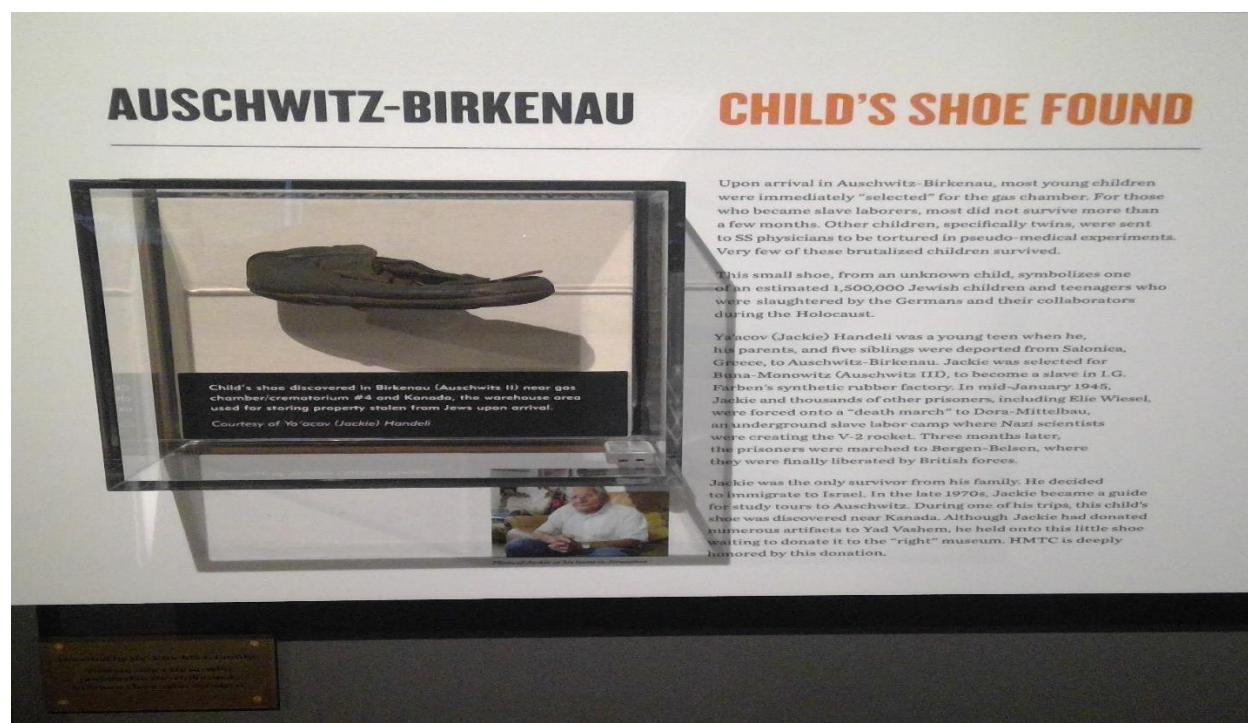
"Auschwitz-Birkenau Child's Shoe Found"
Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center of Nassau County
Permanent Exhibit
Artifact courtesy of Ya'acov (Jackie) Handeli

In order to make the museum object more interactive, the HMTC could incorporate the object into an online virtual exhibit and provide audio and video commentary as well as the

ability to examine artifacts in a 360-degree view. These capabilities would increase visitor

engagement and lead to deeper visitor reflection regarding objects within the exhibit.

Conclusion

While the HMTC does a tremendous job educating the public, there is always the

opportunity to implement new technologies to enhance the visitor experience. By incorporating

cutting-edge practices from other museums, the HMTC can elevate the visitor experience

through interactive technology.

Endnotes

[1] "NMC Horizon Report: 2016 Museum Edition," The New Media Consortium, 2016: 22, Accessed April 5, 2018, http://cdn.nmc.org/media/2016-nmc-horizon-report-museum-EN.pdf.

[2] "Digital Strategy 2015-2017," The Science Museum Group, Accessed April 5, 2018, https://group.sciencemuseum.org.uk/policies-and-reports/digital-strategy/.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] New Media Consortium, 15.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Science Museum Group, "Digital Strategy 2015-2017."

[12] "Watch Live," Holocaust Memorial & Tolerance Center of Nassau County, Accessed April 6, 2018, https://www.hmtcli.org/motl-streams/.

[13] "Student Programs," Holocaust Memorial & Tolerance Center of Nassau County, Accessed April 6, 2018, https://www.hmtcli.org/education/student-programs/#1513270282936-65e21f0c-354e.

[14] "Tolerance Center YouTube Page," Holocaust Memorial & Tolerance Center of Nassau County, Accessed April 6, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/user/ToleranceCenter/videos.

Bibliography

Holocaust Memorial & Tolerance Center of Nassau County. "Student Programs." Accessed April 6, 2018. https://www.hmtcli.org/education/student-programs/#1513270282936-65e21f0c-354e.

Holocaust Memorial & Tolerance Center of Nassau County. "Tolerance Center YouTube Page." Accessed April 6, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/user/ToleranceCenter/videos.

Holocaust Memorial & Tolerance Center of Nassau County. "Watch Live." Accessed April 6, 2018. https://www.hmtcli.org/motl-streams/.

The New Media Consortium. "NMC Horizon Report: 2016 Museum Edition." Accessed April 5, 2018. http://cdn.nmc.org/media/2016-nmc-horizon-report-museum-EN.pdf.

The Science Museum Group. "Digital Strategy 2015-2017." Accessed April 5, 2018. https://group.sciencemuseum.org.uk/policies-and-reports/digital-strategy/.