# Duffy: Museum-Partnership Observation Assignment Two

To begin, it is crucial to identify what the Science Museum Group's Digital Strategy principles are, and they are the following: Experience, Culture, Collection, Narrative Content, and Infrastructure (Science Museum Group). These five principles are applicable for all types of museums, however, having them implemented can be challenging.
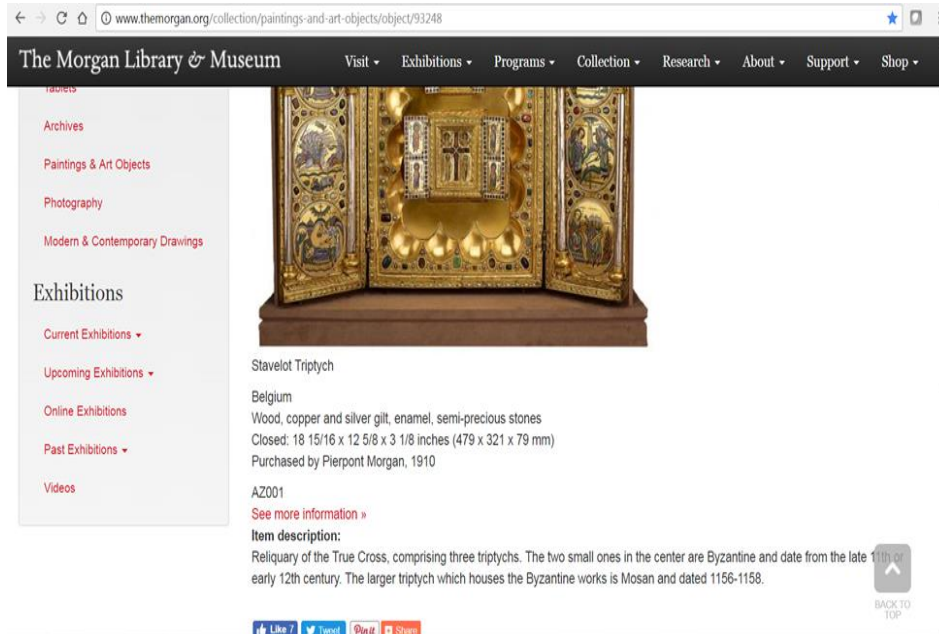
One of the most important principles in my opinion, is the experience of the visitors with the objects of the collections. Information professionals understand that there are many types of visitors that visit exhibitions onsite. Yet I feel in many cases, the online visitors are not always taken into consideration, or visa versa. Essentially, there is a balancing issue between the visitor experiences onsite and online. For example, the Stavelot Triptych on the Morgan Library and Museum website versus what is seen onsite is very different.

On the website, the Stavelot Triptych has the zoom-in feature, which is great because the viewer can see minute details that they may not be able to see in-person. With a piece of art such as this one, that feature is fantastic to have. On a computer, this feature works very well, but when I tried this on my phone, it was very troublesome.
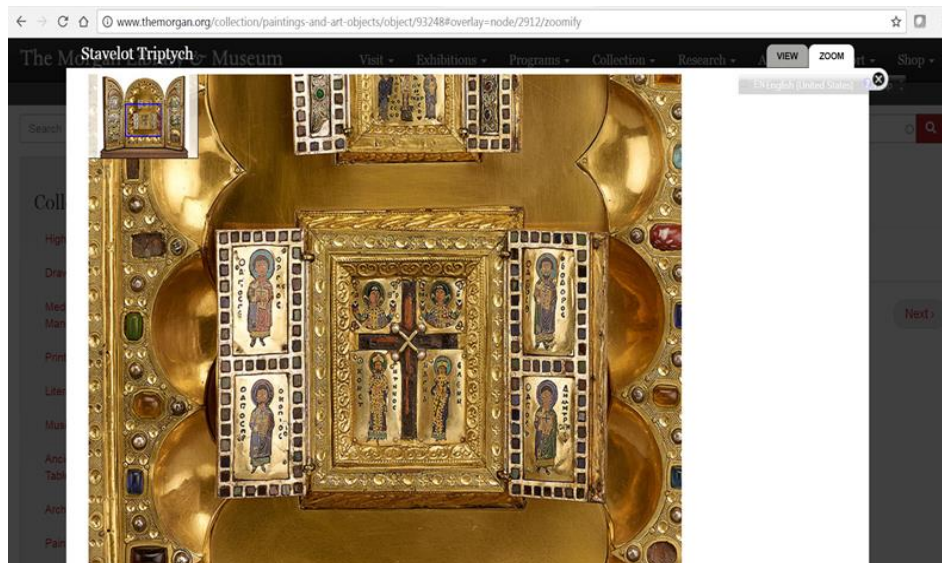
Yet when the visitor looks at the bottom of the page, there is very little information about the object itself. For people like myself, who has a background in this type of art, even I find this to be very lacking so I can only imagine what it would be like for someone who does

not have that knowledge. I saw the, See More Information, option and thought, 'Great, there will be more'. The result of this was a lot of information, yet it was in a very confusing and overwhelming format. To be honest, I was intimidated by it.

In the museum, the object was displayed very well, with the panels wide open so the visitor could see them clearly, but what shocked me was the label and the audio option. Its

label and audio gave the visitor a balanced lesson on the object so they would know and understand what they are looking at without feeling confused or overwhelmed. The label and audio onsite has more information for the visitor to learn from than what the visitor would find on their website. Because of these vast differences, the visitors will have different experiences while looking at the objects in an exhibit. With the continuous use of technology nowadays, digital media can fill the gaps and change the visitors' experiences of exhibitions both onsite and online (Economou, 2008, p. 137).

Stavelot Triptych
Abbey of Stavelot, southeast of Liège (Belgium),
setting and medallions ca. 1156–58, with Byzantine triptychs
from Constantinople, ca. 1100
Champlevé enamel on gilded copper, silver, *vernis brun*, and
precious stones, with plaques and medallions in cloisonné
enamel on gold

PURCHASED BY PIERPONT MORGAN, 1910

A masterpiece of medieval craftsmanship, the Stavelot Triptych was created during the Romanesque golden age of ecclesiastic metalwork, when the dominant centers of production were in the region between the Rhine and Maas rivers (described as Mosan). Originally the astonishing richness of the triptych was probably even more pronounced, with portions of the central panel covered in gold and studded with gems; the modern gilded brass background is intended to evoke a similar effect.

The triptych comprises a Mosan setting, enshrining on the central panel two miniature Byzantine triptychs, of which the larger one contains a visible relic of the True Cross.

Appropriately, the wings are inset with six of the finest Mosan champlevé enamel roundels that narrate the Legend of the True Cross: at left, three scenes depict Constantine's vision, battle, and conversion; at the right, three scenes show Helena's search for and identification of the True Cross. The two small triptychs were probably obtained by Abbot Wibald of St. Remaclus in Stavelot while on a diplomatic mission to Constantinople in 1155–56. He may have commissioned the sumptuous setting for the relics following his return.

To solve this problem, it is a multi-step solution. Firstly, replace the bottom of the Stavelot Triptych's page with the museum label, or audio clip. The museum may have done this purposefully to get people to visit the museum onsite by not having these accessible on their website, which is understandable, but a double-edged sword. The lack of information of the object on their website could discourage people from wanting to visit in-person because typically, there is more information about objects on their websites versus onsite. Second, I would suggest they fix the glitches on their website because looking this up on my phone had some issues like lagging, loading slowly, not always a clear picture, etc. I wouldn't suggest that they have a touch screen tablet in front of the object. They did have that for another object in another exhibit, but that had problems of its own.

Below is the touch screen option for the Universal History scroll, which is great since the scroll itself is sixty feet long. This piece of technology is not even in the same room as the object, and there is only one of this with two ipads in the hall before the exhibits. If I was to choose where to place this, I would have put it by the object itself so it would be convenient for visitors. Economou (2008, p.138) mention that the placement of the station and the interface design of the station is very important for visitors. This station is well done in the way you can pick a roundel and it will tell you more about it. On the other hand, there was no information I could find on this object specifically onsite or online. There was no label for it onsite, and on their website, it was only this feature.
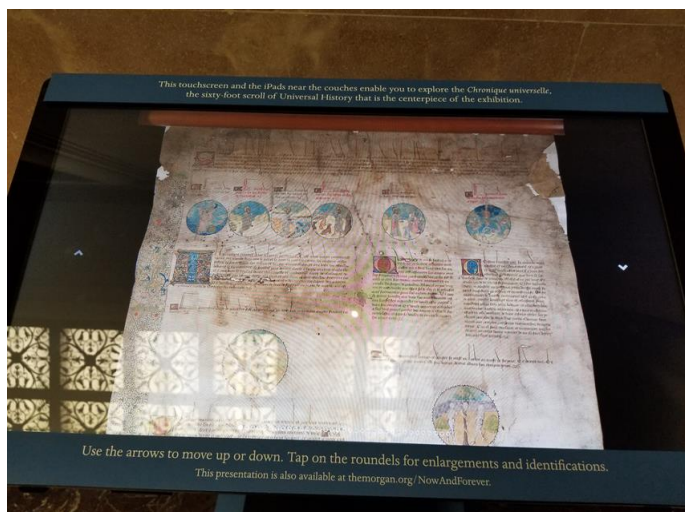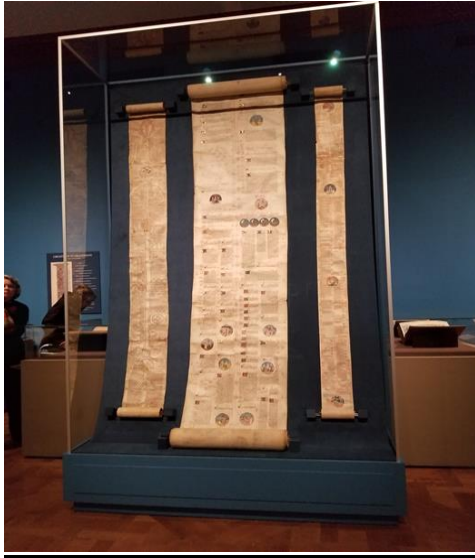
At first, the best solution that I could think of to solving these problems that I have seen with this other object in the collection is to have an app like the Frick Collection. The museum would not have to worry about the costs of getting the devices, replacing them, finding a place to display the devices by the objects themselves. Doing that in itself is a very big financial burden that the museum may not be able to start or sustain. Something that Helal, Maxson, and Ancelet (2013) make the great point that a big problem for museums and technology is that they may not have the technology itself onsite to create an app, and that the staff doesn't have the technological skills to be able to do it. They also mention that creating the technology versus making it user-friendly can be challenging as well. Reading this, as an information professional, was a reality check that creating technology like an app, never mind making it user-friendly, is not easy task. This does not mean that they cannot improve the technology that they already have. As I have stated above, they should improve their website itself (get rid of the glitches so it is phone friendly) as well as have the information labels onsite be consistent with what they have posted online. Online visitors may not be able to see or interact this object or collection in-person, so to have the website be lacking of information, or the opportunity to interact is not fair for them.

As Information professionals, we need to remind ourselves the mentality of a visitor that is viewing our objects or collections both onsite and online. To keep asking ourselves, 'If I was a visitor, what would I like to know about this object? How would I like to interact with it?

What would help me?' Plus, there is always a solution to problems, and with the amount of technology that is available, museums need to see what options are out there, and try them out. With technology, sometimes you will not know how well it works until you test it, and being technologically proactive is the only way to successfully use digital media to make an object, exhibit, or collection interactive with visitors.

References

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