

A new, story-based approach to digital collection

Collaborative effort produces entertaining and educational look at central Florida history



Situation

What was central Florida like before air conditioning and theme parks? Answering that question was the catalyst behind the Central Florida Memory project.

“We wanted to make available to everyone the history of central Florida through important primary materials such as travel diaries, letters, photographs, scrapbooks, maps and postcards, as well as books,” says Barry Baker, Director of Libraries at the University of Central Florida. The idea was born out of discussions among representatives from UCF Libraries, the Orange County Regional History Center and the Orange County Library System. Each agreed that a collaborative effort could produce a wealth of materials accessible through a unique online collection.

Instead of simply displaying materials, they would tie together the collection with a storyline, so users could have a deeper, more colorful experience. The approach, they hoped, would be especially appealing to Florida fourth graders whose curriculum includes Florida history.

Solution

While UCF staffers had experience with digital collections, the other partners did not. Additionally, unlike other UCF digitization projects, this one would not have a staff of dedicated developers. So Selma Jaskowski, Head of Systems and Technology at UCF Libraries, wanted a content management system that all parties could easily use. “CONTENTdm® appealed to us,” says Jaskowski. “It handles a variety of formats. It accommodates our partners with less experience. And it allows us to add stories to accompany the items.”

AT A GLANCE

- Central Florida Memory, a digital resource about the history of Central Florida
- Participants: The University of Central Florida Libraries, The Orange County Regional History Center, The Orange County Library System, Olin Library at Rollins College, Museum of Seminole County History
- Items in collection: 2,600
- Grant funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services will support the addition of 46,000 images to the collection
- Since going live, more than 700,000 Web site hits, an average of 994 hits per day
- More than 36,000 unique visitors (nearly 1,000 of whom bookmarked the Web site)
- www.cfmemory.org

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“The result,” says Jaskowski, “was a wonderful collaboration, with each organization contributing what it could with its available resources.” Despite the varied presentation of each collection, CONTENTdm’s flexible and customizable metadata and collection structure allowed Jaskowski’s team to easily assemble a uniform online collection.

Since its launch, additional partners have joined the effort: Olin Library at Rollins College and the Museum of Seminole County History.

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Results

Central Florida Memory went live in May 2003 and covers history of the region from 1880–1930. It has garnered widespread attention and praise from the public as well as peer institutions. “We’re getting lots of interest from other central Florida libraries, museums and historical societies about being a part of this collection,” says Jaskowski.

A steady stream of users and positive feedback have generated enthusiasm for future project plans. “We want to add more depth to the materials, include new formats such as microfilm collections, maps, audio files and videos,” says Jaskowski. She’s pleased that CONTENTdm supports them all.

For more information about CONTENTdm Digital Collection Management Software, visit www.oclc.org/CONTENTdm/, call 1-800-848-5878, ext. 4301 or send e-mail to contentdm@oclc.org.