

CASE STUDY: CONTENTdm Digital Collection Software

Photos, books, notarial deeds

Veenendaal City Archives help users search their unique collections online

Situation

History has become quite popular. People want to know about their ancestors, their city and what their street used to look like.

Anticipating this interest, in 2005 the archives of the Dutch city of Veenendaal decided to put online part of its rich collection, which includes a large number of pictures and postcards, books and notary deeds. The digitization aspect was not difficult but managing the files and easily getting them online presented a challenge.

“We work with volunteers who are not always very experienced in IT, but they are the ones who use the system the most,” says Dave Eickhoff, Archivist at the Veenendaal City Archives. “So we needed the most user-friendly collection management and publishing solution.”

“One of the requirements was also,” explains Dave, “that the interface had to be in our own local language: Dutch. That way, our external visitors would be able to quickly find their way through the system.”

Solution

“After a thorough evaluation, we chose CONTENTdm because it was the best solution for our needs,”

says Dave.

“On top of that, we liked the fact that CONTENTdm is a complete package and does not require any modules and user licenses to be bought separately.”

Eickhoff set up CONTENTdm exactly the way Veenendaal wanted it: integrated into the City Archives’ Web site. And in order to make the contents as accessible as possible, he translated the English interface into Dutch – one of the many customization choices to adapt the software precisely to individual requirements. Also the Veenendaal city colors and style were adopted, to enable a seamless link-through from the city Web site.

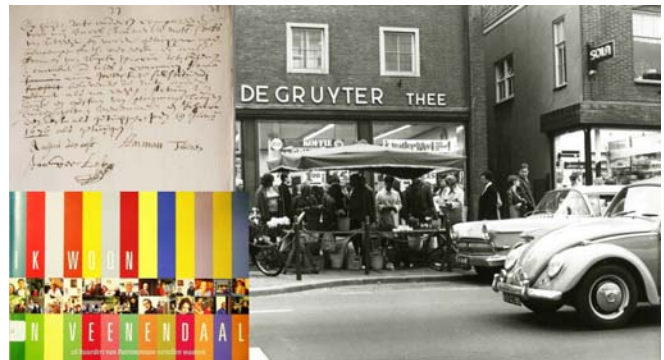
In 2005, the volunteers took care of scanning an initial 1,500 postcards, and later some 1,800 photos and after quality check and approval cycle, put them online with metadata. The photos include current pictures of the city, allowing online visitors to compare views of the past and present. The plan is to eventually have an archive with tens of thousands of pictures available to the public.

AT A GLANCE

The Veenendaal City Archives’ oldest item dates from 1546 and comes from the Peat Council, which used to organize the turf digging in those years. Veenendaal literally translates into ‘peat valley.’ Over the years, the City Archives have acquired various collections that have cultural or historic value. The total collection of the Veenendaal City Archives fills about 2.5 km shelf space.

Another use is that of the covers of books about the city and its region. Since 2007, about 750 are available as a separate collection under its own tab in the interface. The books themselves have not been digitized, but this set-up works as a catalogue, and those interested can come into the archives and consult the publications themselves.

The third type of documents made available via CONTENTdm, also as a separate collection, are notarial deeds from the period 1674-1810. They typically describe household assets, family law proceedings, etc. and as such are a very rich source for those who are finding out all about their ancestors. The 3,700 deeds were added in 2008 and are not fully transcribed, but the metadata give a summary of their interesting contents. Adding the summaries of the old manuscripts is quite a bulky job, so the volunteers are still working hard on it and are progressing step by step.



CASE STUDY: CONTENTdm Digital Collection Software

Photos, books, notarial deeds

Veenendaal City Archives help users search their unique collections online

Result

Thanks to CONTENTdm, all these files are accessible anywhere in the world without any danger of wear and tear or reliance on staff availability and facility operating hours. On average, about 5,000 visitors come to the archives' Web site every month. They can either access the collections directly on the Veenendaal Archives' Web site, or find them through popular online search engines.

Eickhoff notices a shift from physical visitors to digital visitors: "Our Web site becomes our digital study hall." By enabling the digital access, he has ensured the same (or an even better) level of service from the city to its people.

Thanks to the online set-up, one of the Veenendaal volunteers is even adding metadata from home. This CONTENTdm possibility makes its use even more flexible, because it allows using the manpower of people who are valuable for the project at hand, but who may not be able to come into the working location.

The volunteers make it possible that a lot of work is done with basically a very small team of city archivists. Yet, Veenendaal is far from ready with its use of CONTENTdm. Future plans call for adding 8 mm films, videos, old newspapers, maps and more. First up are archive inventories as full-text searchable PDFs.

To view the Veenendaal archive collection, which first went online as photo collection in 2005, go to <http://fotocollectie.veenendaal.nl> and click the tab with the type of collection (photos, books, notary acts) you want to search or browse.

"We needed the most user-friendly collection management and publishing solution."

Dave Eickhoff, Archivist at the Veenendaal City Archives

