

ARGUS

Curation Power: Give it All You've Got, Just Like the CU Art Museum



Case Details

Key Challenges

- Provide public portal access to expand audience
- Directly accessible to faculty and students
- Streamline workflow while enhancing curation

Why Argus was selected

- Can provide more documentation, in more depth
- Highly customizable without training burden
- Web presence significantly expands outreach and access

"The ability to make our collection accessible via the Web, the efficient integration between the administrative back end and the public portal, and finally the ability to customize the application for our own specific needs (without buying more than we needed) were the overriding factors in our choice to manage our collection with Argus"

- Caitlin Rumery
Associate Registrar / Collections Manager

The mission of the CU Art Museum of the University of Colorado Boulder is "to explore the transformative power of art and inspire critical dialogue." Their collection grew significantly in the last ten years and it became clear that the database which they used to manage it (accessible only to three staff members) was no longer suitable. With several goals in mind, museum staff reviewed several museum collection management software applications, and settled on Argus as the one which filled their needs to facilitate exploration of the thousands of works in their collection and to inspire dialogue among faculty, students and the community at large.

The Museum's mission

is tightly aligned to the University's mission, which includes a commitment to innovative use of technology – so there was great support for a new collections management platform and expanded public access via the Web. Argus meets all the explicit goals set out by the Museum staff and leadership in the areas of operational efficiency, strategy and technology (see below). Argus has delivered many other benefits as well – benefits that allow the Museum staff to enhance their integration with the faculty, students and community at large, and to increase their relevance to the University and its academic programs.



Challenges

The Museum's new building houses a Collection Study Center, where Professors can teach classes using original works of art from the CU Art Museum's permanent collection. Before implementing Argus, Museum staff would pull together sets of images based on the syllabus, from which the Professors or students would select their teaching or research materials. Putting the options together was extremely time consuming and ineffective, often including 15 hours going back and forth on email with faculty.

The CUAM collection

The CU Art Museum's collection contains objects that document over three thousand years of human civilization around the world.

From ancient Greek ceramics to Pop Art paintings, the collection includes works in a variety of media from a diverse array of epochs and cultures, including Old Master works on paper, Southwest American and South American santos, southeast Asian and Iranian pottery, African sculpture, 18th century British engraving, 19th century photography, Japanese ukiyo-e, American prints of the 1930s and 1940s, minimalist works on paper, and contemporary sculpture, prints, photographs, and paintings.

The CU Art Museum can be differentiated from other institutions based on its:

- Status as a university art museum
- Mounting of dynamic and innovative programming with a global perspective
- State-of-the-art new facility positioned as a cultural gateway to the University of Colorado at Boulder campus
- Multiple Permanent Collection and changing exhibitions galleries as well as a Collection Study Center

About Lucidea

Lucidea is the premier knowledge management software company, helping people navigate the ever expanding universe of information, turning it into actionable knowledge. We achieve this by providing tools that accelerate access to knowledge resources, while simplifying their management.

To learn more about Argus and how it can help solve your knowledge resource management challenges, visit www.lucidea.com/argus

Solutions

In addition, per Caitlin Rumery, Associate Registrar/Collections Manager at CUAM, it could take as many as 20 hours to put together a list for one student to write one paper on one object. With Argus, this time is now significantly pared down – by 50% or more. There are other workflow benefits too: with Argus's image publishing capabilities, students can now study images online rather than printing out each one for physical evaluation.

Partnership

Faculty and students from the Classics Department have worked especially closely with the Museum staff; there have been multiple classes with students who have done extensive work to flesh out the cataloging information and details on objects in the Classics Collection, such as measurements, weights, and additional scholarly information.

Efficiency and Relevance

Narrative information can be entered into the Portal Notes field in Argus, which is then pushed to the Public Portal and accessible to anyone. While this information was originally accessible only internally, Argus provided the opportunity to configure a selected field, in this case a Notes field, to meet the specific needs of the institution and the scholarly community it serves.

Access and Discovery

Museum staff can now upload documents associated with each object – all kinds of supporting materials now provide content in context: legal documents, label copy, articles, etc. In addition to adding valuable documentation associated with individual objects, Museum staff worked with the Argus support team to structure collections of objects based on University faculty's syllabi. This not only benefits faculty, staff, and students, it benefits people outside the CUAM community as well because they can browse collections of objects they might not have otherwise known are owned by the Museum. The "What's On View" option available via the public portal allows people to see examples of what they will see when they come to CUAM and this encourages visitors to see what is newly installed.

Summary

Operational Benefits

- Assemble lists of objects for faculty based on teaching syllabus and make them available through the portal
- Reduce staff time to compile teaching materials by 50%
- Efficient public portal updates with live integration

Strategic Benefits

- Attract potential donors using the portal as an example of innovation and outreach
- Reach people outside the community and inspire them to visit
- Create a closer partnership with faculty and students who can add to the records

Technological Benefits

- Safe, simple and reliable
- Vendor hosting provides a secure environment, takes care of all updates
- No IT staff or IT skill required, minimal training necessary
- Web delivery is the newest, sustainable technology... will grow as CU grows