stqry

St. Louis Public Library

Case Study: October 30, 2020

Self-Guided Success

Overview

The St. Louis Public Library's Central library is an architectural gem in the heart of Missouri. This 107-year-old landmark serves as a tourist destination, learning center, and cultural hub for the city of St. Louis.

Central library was built with the support of a substantial gift from Andrew Carnegie in 1901. Today, the St. Louis Public Library system consists of 16 branches in addition to Central, with more than four million items in its collection, 85,000 cardholders, 300 full-time staff and over two million visitors annually.

Currently, the mission of the St. Louis Public Library system is "to provide learning resources and information services that support and improve individual, family and community life through a variety of services, programs and initiatives."

Last year, the St. Louis Downtown Chamber and Tourism Center promoted Central as a must-see destination to a conference of over 40,000 attendees. STQRY's app allowed Central to accommodate this influx of traffic, as well as future visitors looking to explore on their own.

The Challenge

Like many other cultural destinations, Central struggles with a lack of full-time docents. With added promotion from the tourism center on top of its regular two million visitors per year, Central wasn't fully equipped to accommodate the new traffic.

In addition to the need for docent guided tours, some visitors in today's digital age prefer to explore independently at their own pace. Central's staff witnessed first-hand how the smartphone revolution has changed the way people interact with public spaces. It became clear over the years that Central was in need of a mobile presence.

An app that guided users through the library was a cost effective way to maximize a visitor's experience and create a comprehensive understanding of the building's significance. The app would also allow Central to accommodate the influx of visitors in town for the conference with limited docents. However, the staff had little to no experience building an app.

Key Features & Functionality

App Highlights
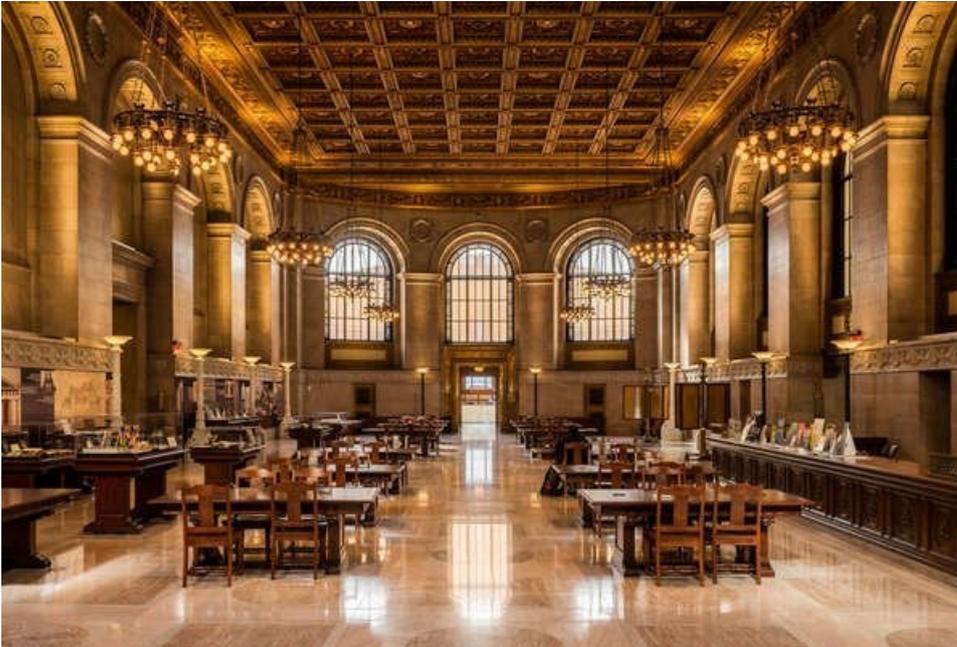
Architectural Tour

Onsite Beacons

Key Features

Multimedia Content

General Library Information

Favorites Button

Key Functionality

Interpretation
(audio guide, self-guided tour)

Interactive Mapping/Wayfinding

Beacon Location Alerts

Self Guided Tour

Educational/Historical Resources

Onsite & Offsite Learning
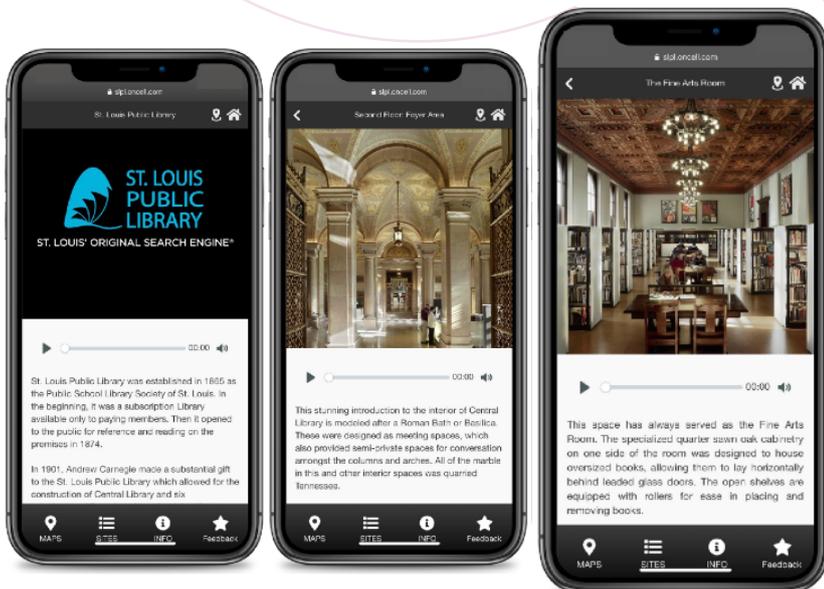
> "I personally love the beacons...When a docent is going through and giving the tour, each docent has their own little nuances that they like to highlight. The beacons allow us to bring that little touch into the technical tour."
>
> **- Cathy Heimberger, Director of Marketing and Programming**

The Solution

Cathy Heimberger, St.Louis Public Library's Director of Marketing and Programming, and Jennifer Hatton, the library's Manager of Public Relations and Digital Marketing, recognized this setback and enlisted STQRY for support in sharing the library's rich history with conference goers and future visitors alike.

When Central first contacted STQRY, they had a vision for how the app would work and what types of content they'd like to add. They discussed that vision in depth with their Customer Success Manager, who explained the building process and end user experience.

Their STQRY representative recommended utilizing beacon technology to highlight key facts about the library. He explained that bluetooth enabled beacons would trigger app notifications as users entered certain areas in the building. These notifications would then bring visitors directly to informational pages in the app that laid out the narrative or background of that particular space.

"I personally love the beacons," said Heimberger. "When a docent is going through and giving the tour, each docent has their own little nuances that they like to highlight. The beacons allow us to bring that little touch into the technical tour."

Once the app was fully developed with personalized features and guided tours, Central was ready to accommodate the conference and engage with their regular visitor base in new and exciting ways.

The Result

The Central team successfully launched the library's app just before the thousands of conference visitors arrived. The app was even promoted in the conference's official program asking visitors to download it ahead of time.

Moreover, the app became a surprisingly cost effective long-term solution when dealing with COVID-19 restrictions. After shutting down completely for months, the library is now re-opening with limited visiting hours and services. The self-guided tour in the app provides safety and security in accordance with social distancing measures while allowing visitors to experience the majesty of Central in person.

When asked about putting the app together, both Hatton and Heimberger agreed that they could not have done it without the help of their dedicated client manager, "I can't say enough about Josh. He's amazing and if it wasn't for him, I don't think we would have launched" said Hatton.

They also praised the ease of use of the STQRY platform for people with no technical background. "It's not something where you need to be an app developer," Hatton explained. "You don't need to have specific skills because STQRY provides so many different options".

In today's digital and socially distanced world, cultural institutions need innovative ways to open their doors and engage with visitors. STQRY's app allowed the St. Louis Public Library to do just that while supporting their mission of improving individual, family and community life in the city.

If you are interested in setting up a free demo, please contact us to schedule an appointment.

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