

Dallas Museum of Art



Customer

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Industry

- Non-profit/Museum

Challenges

- Ongoing growth strategy
- Comprehensive technology vision
- Extensive media content
- Communication silos
- Tech-savvy visitors

Solution

- IP communications infrastructure: The Arts Network
- Wireless design & implementation: NEC Professional Services
- Ongoing management & support: NEC Remote Managed Services
- NEC Digital Signage

Results

- Enhanced staff collaboration
- Quality, on-demand content
- Wireless access
- High-profile exhibitions
- Additional IT funding

The nation's non-profit museums serve a broad audience with a focused mission that is generally educational in nature. As private and for-profit collections provide competition for traditional museums, curators and IT staff are turning to technology to bring art to the masses in new and innovative ways.

The Dallas Museum of Art (DMA) ranks among the leading art institutions in the country. Distinguished for its innovative exhibitions and groundbreaking educational programs, the museum welcomes more than 600,000 visitors a year. The DMA partnered with NEC to implement The Arts Network, the museum's overarching strategy of leveraging technology for organizational growth.

Challenges

In recent years, the DMA has been in the midst of transforming from regional to national prominence. To support and achieve its growth goals, DMA staff decided to leverage technology that could both enhance the visitor experience and increase the educational value for its many classroom tours. "We conducted a series of in-house, cross-departmental brainstorming sessions to come up with a solution," says Homer Gutierrez, director of Information Technology, DMA. "Educators, technology experts, and workshop leaders contributed ideas to address several of our challenges."

The group created The Arts Network, the museum's comprehensive technology vision designed to improve a broad spectrum of museum operations. "On the public-facing side, The Arts Network would impact a visitor in the gallery and the kinds of media they are able to see," says Gutierrez. "And then there's an internal side where we're able to better streamline all areas of our workflow –from production logistics all the way down to even our accounting department."

Challenges (cont.)

The museum's staff wanted The Arts Network to include a wireless solution for better employee communication. "Time is of the essence when we are preparing for an exhibition opening," says Gutierrez. "To alleviate decision latency, it is crucial that our exhibition staff have the ability to stay in touch from anywhere in the building." The wireless solution would also improve visitors' experience. "We wanted to address our visitors' desire to use electronic and mobile devices to plug into museum programs, both online and while visiting the museum," Gutierrez adds.

The DMA sought a partner that would help the museum implement its technology vision; and, provide solutions to improve staff communications, exhibition collaborations and educational programming.

Solution

The DMA partnered with NEC to implement The Arts Network. The solution includes an IP voice solution as well as a more robust data infrastructure. "NEC brought consolidated technology to The Arts Network initiative," says Gutierrez. "This eases system management and lowers our total cost of ownership."

The museum-wide network simplifies and enhances program development. "We had already digitized many collections and program-related audio, video and still-image files," says Gutierrez. "We can now wrap meaningful programming around this digital content so visitors can better appreciate it."

The Arts Network also includes an adaptable, Web-based program-delivery system, which allows the DMA to push rich-media content to its website for visitors to access on-demand. "Our tremendous supply of digital media includes interviews with artists and writers, performances, exhibition installations, early photography and detailed object photography," says Gutierrez. "Our backlog is extensive and contains some rare items with which we are excited to now be able to share with the public." The Arts Network has also allowed the museum's Web developers to create a meta-data management system, enabling online guests to easily search and retrieve content on the web.

The DMA also leveraged NEC to design and install its wireless solution. "NEC did an excellent job of working around our exhibition department's schedule and staying in close touch with the registrars who track the location of art objects," said Gutierrez.

The museum's wireless solution improves staff communication. "Our wireless solution allows our exhibition teams to stay in touch by using fixed-mobility devices so that connections are clear," says Gutierrez. "At the same time, it enables our museum visitors to sit in a gallery and access information on their laptops via wireless Web connections."

More recently, the museum also installed NEC digital signage. "The signs inform people of exhibits, hours, and other useful information," says Gutierrez.

Results

The DMA realized its technology vision through its partnership with NEC. "The Arts Network has allowed us to break down communication silos and enhance collaboration within the museum while pushing more content out to the Web where people can access it," says Gutierrez. "The network also made possible our wireless solution, which now covers 85 percent of our campus."

The Egyptian Government chose the DMA as one of the venues for its Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs exhibit. "This was a landmark event that added to the DMA's stature," says Gutierrez. "The Arts Network was instrumental in preparing the museum to maximize an exhibition like this one."

As a result of The Arts Network's initial success, the DMA received additional funding to further the initiative. The Center for Creative Connection (C3) was created as a primary venue for Arts Network programming and includes a laptop-technology center and an arts lab where children and families are encouraged to artistically express themselves. The museum also launched smARTphone tours to allow museum visitors to use their personal or museum-provided, web-enabled devices to access new and interactive content such as pictures, audio interviews and video documentaries and interviews coded for each artwork.

"NEC has been extremely proactive, helping us make the most of what we have; extremely consultative and well informed. They've helped us think ahead about what we intend to do with our wireless system so when we get to the future, we won't have to pay extra costs," concludes Gutierrez.

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