Transforming the Digital Museum

- Widespread access to museum information resources
- New abilities to manipulate or interact with digital resources
- Changing information policies for museum professionals
- Changing needs and expectations for museum visitors

Images courtesy of the Spurlock Museum
http://www.spurlock.uiuc.edu
2001.05.0112
New Needs Pose New Challenges

- Digital museum resources are blurring boundaries between online and in museum visits;

- Removing barriers between collections management and exhibit design; and

- Encouraging new forms of interactivity between museum users and digital collections.
Example: Digital Objects...

- Bellini’s Feast of the Gods
- Institute for Dynamic Educational Adventures
- webexhibits.org/feast
Example: Digital Collections...

- HistoryWired: a few of our favorite things
- National Museum of American History
- historywired.si.edu
Example: Onsite vs. Online...

- Restoration Online
- Minneapolis Institute of Arts
- www.artsmia.org/restorationonline
Example: Personal Collections...

- Virtual gallery of favorite artifacts
- Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco
- www.thinker.org/fam/about/imagebase
A Common Question

If visitors can access our museum’s resources online, will they still visit the museum?

Images courtesy of the Spurlock Museum
http://www.spurlock.uiuc.edu
1983.04.0110
The Real Question

What role does the digital museum play in the life of the user of museum resources?

Images courtesy of the Spurlock Museum
http://www.spurlock.uiuc.edu
1999.13.0001a
Questions about Users

- Why do users seek digital museum information resources?
- How do users integrate digital resources into their everyday lives?
- How can digital resources help visitors make sense of museum exhibits from their own perspectives?
- How can museum professionals better meet the needs of individual museum visitors?

Images courtesy of the Spurlock Museum
http://www.spurlock.uiuc.edu
1990.10.0056
Research Questions

- Why do people visit museum websites before going to museums?
- How do museum websites influence one’s decision to visit a museum?
- How do museum visitors integrate online museum resources into their everyday lives?

Images courtesy of the Spurlock Museum
http://www.spurlock.uiuc.edu
1913.14.1652
Survey Results (Q3)

How important is it for a museum to have a museum website?

- Very Important: 67
- Important: 24
- Neutral: 4
- Unimportant: 1
- Very Unimportant: 4

Images courtesy of the Spurlock Museum
http://www.spurlock.uiuc.edu
2000.17.0022
Survey Results (Q4)

How likely to visit museum website before visiting museum?

- Very Likely: 54
- Likely: 30
- Neutral: 10
- Unlikely: 4
- Very Unlikely: 2

Images courtesy of the Spurlock Museum
http://www.spurlock.uiuc.edu
1990.12.0002
Survey Results (Q7)

How likely to use museum website to decide whether to visit museum?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likelihood</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Likely</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likely</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unlikely</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Unlikely</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Images courtesy of the Spurlock Museum
http://www.spurlock.uiuc.edu
2002.03.0001
### Survey Results (Q11h)

**Prefer to do some things in museums and some things on websites?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Images courtesy of the Spurlock Museum
http://www.spurlock.uiuc.edu
1996.24.2369a
Survey Results (Q12)

Strongly Prefer Museum:
- View artifacts / collections (72%)
- Tour galleries / exhibits (70%)

Strongly Prefer Website:
- Learn about hours / location / directions (46%)
- Learn about admission fees / pricing (44%)

Images courtesy of the Spurlock Museum
http://www.spurlock.uiuc.edu
2004.11.0037
Survey Results (Q12)

**Prefer Website:**
- Access research materials / archives (41%)
- Learn about programs / tours / events (41%)
- Learn about current and future exhibits (41%)
- Learn about museum facilities / shops (33%)

**No Preference:**
- Engage in educational activities / use learning resources (38%)
- Learn about employment / volunteer opportunities (43%)
- Learn about donation / membership opportunities (46%)

Images courtesy of the Spurlock Museum
http://www.spurlock.uiuc.edu
1996.24.0509
Survey Results (Q13)

How likely to visit museum website after visiting museum?

- Very Likely: 25
- Likely: 43
- Neutral: 21
- Unlikely: 7
- Very Unlikely: 3

Images courtesy of the Spurlock Museum
http://www.spurlock.uiuc.edu
1916.03.0004
Survey Results (Q16c)

After leaving museum, expect to be able to find museum website easily?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Images courtesy of the Spurlock Museum
http://www.spurlock.uiuc.edu
1990.12.0001
Away from museum, rely on museum website to answer questions?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey Results (Q17)

How likely to visit museum and museum website repeatedly?

- Very Likely: 32
- Likely: 44
- Neutral: 15
- Unlikely: 5
- Very Unlikely: 3

Images courtesy of the Spurlock Museum
http://www.spurlock.uiuc.edu
2003.05.0001
Survey Results (Q18)

How likely to visit museum websites independent of visiting museums?

- Very Likely: 23
- Likely: 39
- Neutral: 21
- Unlikely: 12
- Very Unlikely: 4

Images courtesy of the Spurlock Museum
http://www.spurlock.uiuc.edu
1993.20.0011a
Conclusions

- Visitors have a complicated yet complementary relationship with museums and museum websites.
- Visitors are often building this relationship on their own initiative.
- To understand this relationship, researchers and practitioners should look at the digital museum in the life of the user.

Images courtesy of the Spurlock Museum
http://www.spurlock.uiuc.edu
1916.07.0019