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Size Matters: Engaging Your Users Where They Are

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Size Matters: Engaging Your Users Where They Are @

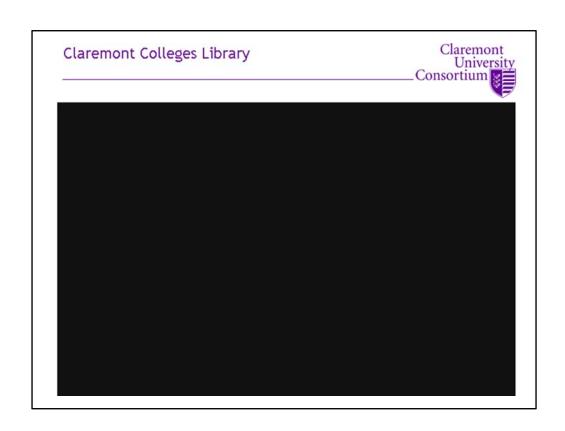
Los Angeles Chapter of the American Society for Information Science and Technology

2010 SPRING WORKSHOP

John McDonald Claremont Colleges Library

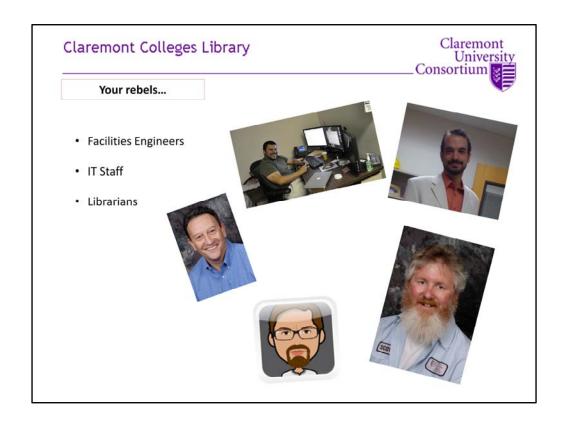
Thanks for inviting me and I'm happy to host everyone here today. I'm feeling very at home here, not only because it is home but because the title of the workshop harkens back to my days as a midwestern boy. I thought only midwesterners ended questions with a preposition like "Where you at?" or maybe the one of you workshop planners is from the midwest too.

Anyway, I'm here to talk about our use of digital displays in the library. This started relatively recently, but being in hollywood, there's already a movie about it....





We were charged with coming up with an electronic version of what our CEO, Bob Walton said he saw at Berkeley. One of his friends there was proud of their outdoor daily front pages shown in and around their Library and "Free Speech Movement Café". At the time, he swore up and down that they were digital displays, but when one of the planning team members happened to be up there they discovered they were actually just display cases with paper newspapers tacked up inside.



But, being as naïve as we were, we decided we could do it (especially if those other guys had).

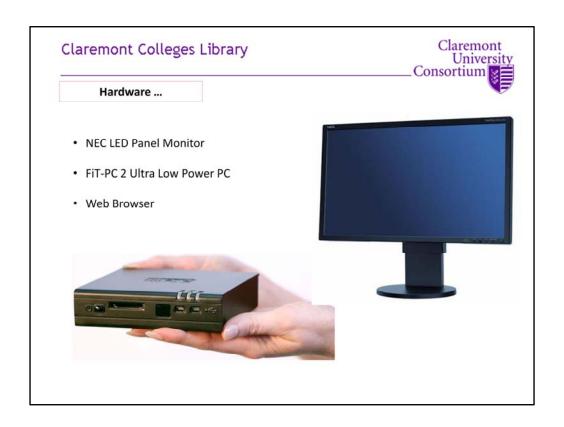
The group who actually did the work – definitely not me in any way other than translating the idea into instructions – were our facilities engineers, one of our librarians, and out IT staff. They are Jack Weimer, our staff engineer who did most of the design work, Scot Simpson, who did the welding and fabricating of the custom mounts, Sam Kome, our R&D librarian who wrote all the custom code to put and display the content, and Peter Zacarias and Dave Fresquez who did all the hardware and software configuration and maintenance.



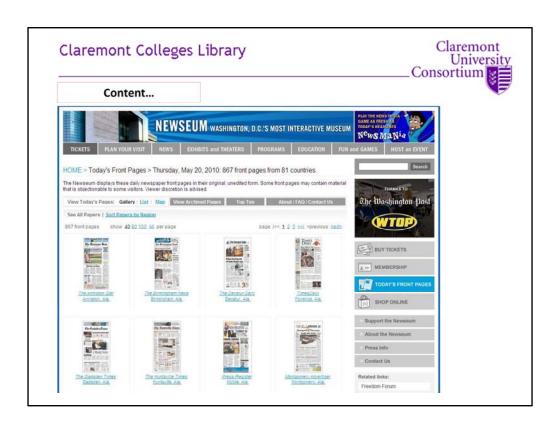
First, Jack designed a 3d digital layout to allow for spacing adjustments and included an enclosed area for electronics (which the enclosed area was scrapped because of cost...but then when students started tampering with plugs we then added these secure boxes back in).

The design allows for an angle of the screens from one another, vertical and horizontal adjustments and the offset requirements from the poles...all to fit in the space between Honnold's columns proportionally.

Scott Simpson (CFS machine shop) was instrumental in getting the welding, fabrication and installation completed.



The hardware for these displays are NEC LED panels, connected to FiT PC-2 Ultra Low Power thin clients running only a web browser.



The news displays are html pages running in Firefox. Images are requested directly by each display from Newseum by their URL, with each image onscreen for 90 seconds and content refresh every 60 minutes (timezones...). We put together custom html, javascript and python routines to make it automated and pretty.

Details:

First I went and looked at the Newseum access policy and found this: http://www.newseum.org/about/about.aspx?item=COP080125&style=b

"Unless otherwise noted, users who wish to download or print text and image files from this Web site may do so without the Newseum's express permission, provided that they comply with the following conditions:

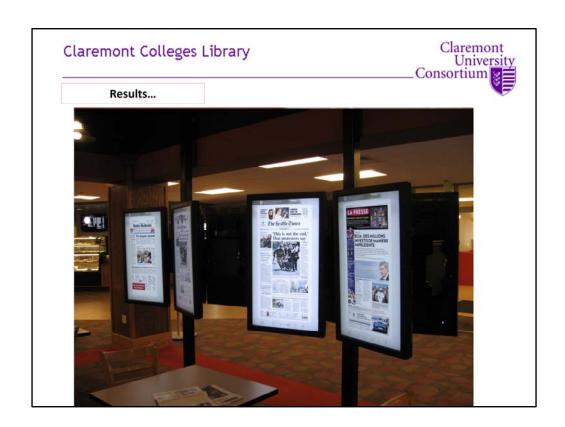
- * 1. The content may only be used for personal, educational or noncommercial purposes.
- * 2. Users must cite the author and source of the content as they would material from any printed work.
- * 3. The citation must include all copyright information and other information associated with the content and the URL for the Newseum Web site.
 - * 4. None of the content may be altered or modified.
- * 5. Users must comply with all other terms or restrictions which may be applicable to the individual file, image or text."

I think we comply with all that.

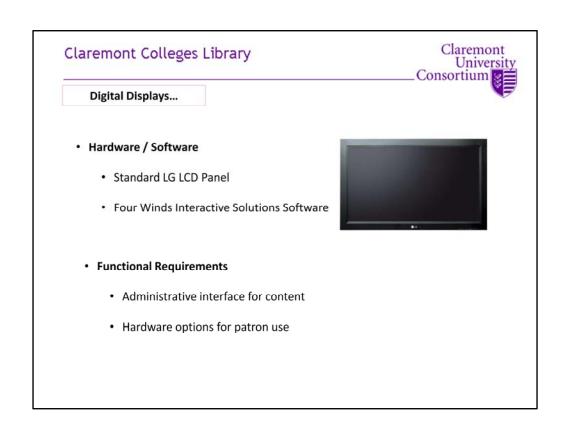
I actually need to restore the Newseum byline – we did provide that up until a recent revision when it fell off. Alain knows to have it on the production version. I'll make sure we're compliant by LACASIST.



Here is the results, pulled directly from Newseum and reformatted to fit the screens. There are 6 to 10 different newspapers scrolling through each monitor roughly grouped into these eight categories: Southern California, North California, California Non-English and South America, National, Europe & Australia, Africa, Middle East, and Asia. The selected papers are drawn from the major metropolitan areas that represent current student's home addresses – many non-California undergrads are from Seattle and also the Washington DC areas, so we included more of those papers.



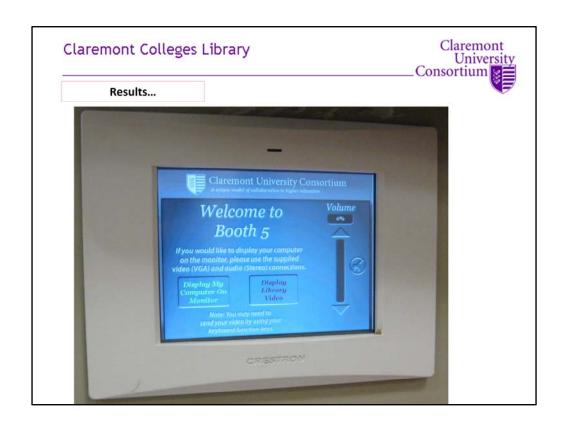
You are welcome to go see the displays yourself downstairs at any time, but here's a couple pictures of what they currently look like. They're very popular, and you can come in at almost any time and see someone standing around them reading a bit. I remember an instance that made me very proud of them – I know one of our CGU Grad students – she had done a project interviewing library staff the previous year – and I found her standing in front of one early one morning. I stopped to asked her if she liked them, and she said, "I am so happy – I haven't read a newspaper in Turkish in years – I can't believe you have this displayed!"



So we also have some other, much more functional displays as well. We have 9 other digital displays, located high on the walls of the café, or at eye level in some of the booths. All displays show a variety of content arranged in the Four Winds sofware, but serve an additional purpose as a secondary monitor for students working on group projects.



Each of these displays scrolls through our Campus Calendar, the weather, a CNN news ticker in text, and usually a CNN news window (on mute).



When a student wants to hook their laptop up to one, they simply use the touch screens mounted below them, plug in a VGA cable, and they're good to go. Throughout this year, we've been astonished at how much they've been used – we'll often walk through the café and see students hooked up to the monitor, working through presentations, projects, or other collaborative work. They're so popular that we've had to replace the monitor cables about three times each per display.

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So that's what we're doing. It's a work in progress, but we've gotten some great reviews from our students and faculty about them and we have strong evidence that they're being used. The maintenance and upkeep is almost minimal and the return on the investment has been outstanding.

I'd like to once again thank everyone for coming to the workshop today.