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"artiFACTS" Galore!

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Abstract

Back on my first day of training, Meggan told me about a new feature that the Library was in the process of adding to select exhibits. Ever heard of QR codes? Well, through "artiFACTS," these codes will soon be changing the way Gettysburg students can interact with special items and displays. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Musselman Library, Gettysburg College, Exhibits Intern, QR Codes

Disciplines

Library and Information Science | Museum Studies | Public History

Comments

The Interns at Gettysburg College's Musselman Library have been capturing their internship experiences since the spring of 2011. *Bloggng the Library* has evolved since the first post. Early posts up through 2013 are available on [Blogger](#), and more recent posts can be seen on [WordPress](#).

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Blogging the Library

The Interns @ Gettysburg College's Musselman Library

"artiFACTS" Galore!

Friday, July 6, 2012

By: Emily Francisco '14

Back on my first day of training, Meggan told me about a new feature that the Library was in the process of adding to select exhibits. Ever heard of QR codes? Well, through "artiFACTS," these codes will soon be changing the way Gettysburg students can interact with special items and displays.

Meggan was hoping I could test the system out and give some feedback. Before I started, I sat down and read an article Meggan had given me on QR codes and academic libraries. Published in the November 2010 issue of *College & Research Libraries News*, the article was titled "QR codes and academic libraries: Reaching mobile users." As someone who doesn't know much about these kinds of technology, or even SmartPhones, really, the article was pretty enlightening. I've outlined some of the key facts below (For the full article, visit: <http://crln.acrl.org/content/71/10/526.full.pdf+html>)

QR codes, short for "Quick-Response" codes, are matrix barcodes that a SmartPhone can read. To read a QR code, a phone user must download a free app that allows the content to be downloaded at high speed (hence "Quick Response"). These codes originated in Japan, where they've been popular for years.

To use the QR code app, all the SmartPhone user has to do is hold his or her phone up to the code, as if taking a picture. Scanning the code takes a few seconds, after which the user is brought to the code's content (typically a web address). In terms of Musselman Library exhibits, this means that, with our new system of QR codes, it will take only a few seconds for a student with a SmartPhone to get more information about objects.

The "artiFACTS" signs were added to items like the Samurai armor on the main floor and Eddie Plank's baseball in Special Collections, not to mention a number of portraits in Penn Hall Lyceum, Weidensall, and on the other floors of the library. I think it's a really cool substitute for lengthy wall descriptions; on a grander scale, if expanded in the U. S. the technology could have the potential to change the way visitors experience museums.

I had fun being the guinea pig and going through the "artiFACTS" labels with Meggan's iPhone. Afterwards I typed up my feedback notes in the following chart:

artiFACTS

Pros:

- Adapts and connects featured exhibits to popular technology (SmartPhones)
- Relatively easy to use
- Majority of students DO have SmartPhones presently (statistically speaking)
- Provides instantaneous information
- Also gives **more detail** than a small, informative panel would
- Clever, interesting way of linking artifacts across campus (Musselman Library, Penn Hall, Weidensall)
- Could it be expanded to more exhibits, even temporary ones?

Cons:

- Not all students have SmartPhones; **what should these students do to acquire the same information?**
- On the tire sculpture, the QR code is inconveniently placed. Student has to get close to the ground in order to scan the code properly. **Can it be adjusted?**
- On the webpage for the Jeremiah Zimmerman portrait (2nd floor), the content describes Zimmerman as "donning a gold *Phi Beta Kappa* [ΦΒΚ] key and chain." At a closer glance, it appears that the Greek letters on the pendant read: "ΦΚΨ" (*Phi Kappa Psi*). **Can this error be corrected?**

I suggested to Meggan that artiFACTS could be publicized more by making it a First Year Seminar/First Year Experience activity. Depending on how many students in the class have SmartPhones, it could be a great way to encourage students to interact with the artifacts in the library. I think that these QR codes, if given enough publicity, could have the potential to change the way our exhibits are experienced.

Personally, I learned a lot about certain objects that I wouldn't have known otherwise. It seems like a cool addition to Musselman Library and the rest of campus. My summer roommates thought so too when I told them about it—hopefully we'll be able to get more feedback this fall!

More on "artiFACTS": <http://www.gettysburg.edu/library/m/qr/index.dot>

<http://bloggingthelibrary2012.blogspot.com/>