bConnected CASE STUDY

The Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology

Problem

The Hearst Museum has an archive of thousands of historical documents that are requested by the public. It needs a solution to store digital documents, one that works well for multi-page PDF or Word documents to be previewed, archived, and shared.

Currently, the museum has digitized approximately 20% of its archive — 3,000 documents comprised of 100,000 scanned pages — which are available to all museum employees, and to be shared with select requestors.

Digitizing images helps preserve the originals. "Some of our photos and documents are 100 years old and very fragile," says Paolo Pellegatti, archaeologist and senior museum scientist. "So when they come to our attention, we try to get a good digital copy so we can take care of the original and know that it's safe and that if the original is ever needed, we will find it in the same condition it was 10 years ago."

Previous Solution

The museum used Research Hub for storage, which didn't allow sharing outside of UC Berkeley. Since 50% of the museum's requests come from people who are outside of the Berkeley network, after Research Hub was discontinued, the museum wanted a solution that would enable a better sharing workflow.

Solution

While the museum turned to a private commercial enterprise to store images of artifacts, it looked to Box for document storage. Now when a document is requested, first museum staff search Box to see if that document is digitized. Documents that aren't excessively long they can be previewed in Box without downloading them.

If the item is already digitized, that document is moved to a shared folder in Box, and shared with the requester. From that shared folder, staff can see how many times the requester has viewed and downloaded the document. This saves time for Pellegatti and others, since they don't need to send emails about the status of that document. He knows exactly when the transaction is completed, at which point he removes the requester from the shared drive and sends them an invoice.

Although the vast majority of documents are available for all museum employees, when necessary Box also allows for private folders to store certain confidential documents for both employees and the general public.

With an increasing number of documents digitized, this means a requestor doesn't need to come in to the museum, and that staff save time searching for the original.

"With the sharing capability of Box, we are able to receive a request, assess the time that is needed, digitize the resource, and provide the requester with a digitized image in a very short time," says Pellegatti. "We are hoping to better serve our constituents by reducing the turnaround greatly."