MUSEUMS ARE EXPERIMENTING WITH AUGMENTED REALITY - WHILE SERVING MORE COMMON REALITIES LIKE NAVIGATING A MUSEUM WITH YOUNG CHILDREN.

Detroit Institute of Arts brings artifacts to life for visitors through augmented reality. The Lumin project not only offers a more immersive experience than the previous audio guide (such as revealing the skeleton of a mummy); it also places virtual blue dots on the floor to guide guests from one artifact to the next.

In 2016, the Art Institute of Chicago introduced JourneyMaker to appeal specifically to families with young children. It uses digital touch-tables to engage young visitors in creating a customized museum tour. The personalized adventure is printed in color on a tabloid sheet that folds into a take-along guide, complete with activities to engage with artifacts at each stop. For the older set, the Art Institute also offers an app with audio tours, exhibit guides, and an interactive map. A popular “look it up” feature, which allows visitors to type in a code printed on the artwork’s label for a related audio segment, has increased average dwell times.

Lessons Learned: Digital Wayfinding Deployments

- Start with a goal to serve a specific audience; do not start with a declaration, such as, “We should have an app.”
- Experiment and iterate.
- Observe and evaluate.
- Collaborate with experts.
- Commit staff and funds to longer-term visions.

Visitors to the Detroit Institute of Arts rely on cutting-edge technology for wayfinding to explore a fracture in the mummy’s skull and ponder its provenance.
HEALTHCARE INSTITUTIONS ARE EXPANDING THEIR MOBILE APPS TO INCLUDE "BLUE DOT" WAYFINDING AND EXPLORING UNIQUE HYBRIDS OF DIGITAL AND STATIC SIGNAGE TO SERVE NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS

- At Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta, an app uses Bluetooth wireless technology to help visitors get from where they are to where they want to go. As visitors walk, the app updates the position of the blue dot marking the visitor’s location. In addition to highlighting the user’s route on the map, the app provides step-by-step directions to the visitor’s destination.

- NYU Langone Health has positioned digital pylons at busy entrances to direct visitors to major destinations; directions are listed in English, with equivalents rotating in Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, Russian, and Arabic. Thanks to a continuing program of usability research, each generation of these pylons have become more useful to patients and visitors.

TRANSIT SYSTEMS FILL IN THE GAPS WITH EFFECTIVE “NEXT TRAIN” MESSAGING AND “NEXT STOP” SIGNS. AIRLINES AND AIRPORTS ARE INVESTING IN APPS WITH TRULY HELPFUL FEATURES: CHECK REAL-TIME WAIT TIMES AT SECURITY OR PRE-ORDER LUNCH AT YOUR STOPOVER.

- Chicago Transit Authority has made modest changes in content and placement of digital screens at bus stops and around the “L” subway/rail system—with great results. “Next train” messaging is now located outside L stations, before riders hit the turnstiles. It also gives riders more information they might need to adjust their commute, such as recommending a different route in the case of a delay.

- New York’s Metropolitan Transit Authority has mounted “next stop” signs on the ceilings of buses, including the upcoming sequence of stops; arrival times; and transfer options to subway, ferry, and other buses.

- American Airlines encourages visitors to explore amenities and shops at airports using blue-dot wayfinding. Their app also has an “order food” button for time-crunched travelers.

- Houston Airport System offers web-based interactive maps of George Bush Intercontinental (IAH) and William P. Hobby (HOU); the site also includes real-time wait times for all security checkpoints and availability of parking spaces in the garages.
