

The New Interactive

Museum exhibits are coming to life in an even more dynamic fashion, thanks to the advances of smartphones and tablet computing. As a result of the ever-present nature of these technologies, “multi-touch is what media producers and designers assume they’re going to get these days,” observed Andrew Kidd, business development manager for Electrosonic.

more online

Read the extended version of this story at systemscontractor.com/0911.

The demand for multi-touch has pushed interactive exhibits beyond normal touchscreen displays into a diverse array of new forms. “Touch-based exhibits can be projected, or constructed of Christie MicroTiles—they can be all manner of things now,” Kidd said. He added that the videogame industry’s motion-sensing innovations have also altered expectations for exhibits. “We’re finding people wanting to incorporate a lot more tools into interactive exhibits, for example, cameras that sense where you’re coming from and how many people are in the group and do different things with the display according to that information.”

We may live in a multi-touch world now, but soon the gesture will supersede touch in museum exhibits. “The hardware computer touch screen display hasn’t changed that much in quite a few years,” observed Sean Langdon, director of business development for Horizon Display, which works with exhibit designers and AV integrators to create custom interactive displays. “We’ll laugh at it when we see it 10 years from now. Everything will be gesturing. With a 3D gesture recognizer, your body becomes the input. We’ll all get used to that, because in a lot of ways it’s better, faster, and cheaper.”

For the time being, Langdon said demand is for “museum quality” touchscreen treatments, with stainless steel bezels and enclosures topping the list for aesthetic appeal. Horizon is also seeing a lot of touchscreen customization for ultra-wide aspect ratio displays.

“Basically the usage model is based on whether a 12-year-old can walk up and use an interactive display,” Langdon said. “Touch is second-nature to the younger generations.”

While video displays and projected images continue to get bigger, brighter, and higher-resolution, what museum clients are most interested in is doing more in the way of interactivity. Museums want to get beyond the cinema experience and into the realm of audience participation, noted Adam Neale, director of 7th Sense, manufacturer of advanced media servers that are often used in museum projects. “Rather than it just being a playback type of exhibit, there is more interaction with the audience or a feeling of immersion.”

Where touchscreens were formerly used as more of a passive interface for selecting playlists of content, now they’re part of a more active interaction. For example, The Chicago Museum of Science and Industry’s Giant Heart project, which employs 7th Sense’s Delta servers, takes the pulse of those interacting with the display and dynamically alters the movie playback. “So now instead of a small touchscreen controlling a big image, now a large image is controlling the interaction.”

Those interactive experiences will continue to evolve in the museum space, according to Langdon. “As technology keeps getting better and cheaper, people can less expensively and more easily deploy a project that more closely resembles their vision of that exhibit in a perfect world.”

After all, he said, “if you’ve seen it out there, it’s already five years old. The projects we see in the lab and under development are very exciting. People should be asking for more from technology.”

—Kirsten Nelson

Group and Assistive Listening products perfect solution to ensure your guests a single sound.

ly portable - use indoors or out.

audience engaged and immersed.

ible and affordable systems - solutions your specific needs.

etime Warranty with hassle-free support.

Listen units really help to save the voice of the tour guide. The units are so practical for rounding everyone and moving along, saving time and keeping the tour on schedule.

- John Grayson, Rock & Roll Hall of Fame & Museum

Don't miss a single sound.

Listen