Faculty Showcase '07

Sponsored by Academic Technology at Simmons College

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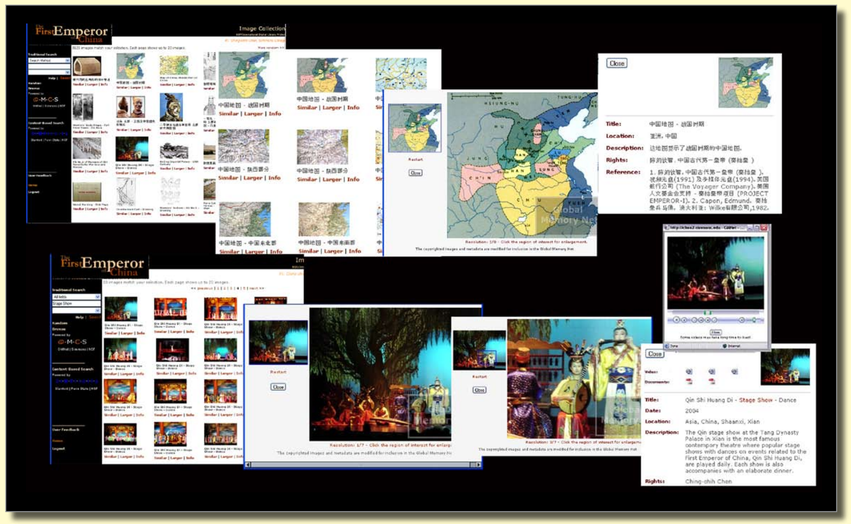
Goals

- Create an online world digital library that serves as a model for integrating multi-format and multi-lingual resources from museums, archives, libraries and personal resources.
- Offer an online gateway to some of the world's greatest digital collections.
- Increase access to materials that have been difficult to reach due to distance, form, and technical barriers.
- Develop a collaborative infrastructure that can support an increasing number of contributing partners, a system through which collections continue to grow.
- Develop a cutting-edge integrated high-end and innovative system to provide retrieval capabilities for users, including both traditional and content-based retrieval.
- Provide users with an integrated digital library that seamlessly links audio, video, text, and bibliographic resources.

Global Memory Net

Project Overview

Imagine that you are doing research for a project on Imperial China, Muslim civilizations, or Slovenian traditions in Croatia. Where could you go to find information? Perhaps you might try to see what you could find online – but how would you know if the information is credible? In any event, you would probably need to piece together information from many sources. You might also be able to find wonderful books on your topic,



but perhaps you would like to get a closer look at primary documents that are unavailable in your local library.

Imagine how your learning and research would be enriched if you also could take a close look at artwork, maps, and other forms of cultural artifacts text. Global Memory Net (GMN) is designed serve just that need – to provide students, faculty, other researchers, and the general public with a high-quality, sensory-rich resource for in depth browsing, research and appreciation of the cultures of the world.

Launched in July 2006 with funding from the National Science Foundation's International Digital Library Program, GMN is an outgrowth of Chinese Memory Net, a project developed from 2000-2002 that was more limited in scope. The original core collection was created out of Professor Chen's 20-year multimedia project, PROJECT EMPEROR-I, initially supported by the US National Endowment for the Humanities Library Technology Program.

Since 2000, the GMN has involved a range of national and international collaborators in both its technology and its content development, including: UNESCO's Memory of the World Program, the US Library of Congress, Pennsylvania State University, University of Pennsylvania, University of Florence, Carnegie Mellon University, and National Tsinghua Univeristy, Taiwan, and many other countries like Croatia, China, Japan, Thailand, and Vietnam.

In addition to GMNet's own collections, users of GMN can also search over 2400 collections from 80 countries around the world (and growing). Most GMNet visitors to online repositories do NOT know what is available in the collection. GMNet permits users to browse and seek random images, and then retrieve images of a similar color and shape with the simple click of the mouse. From there, one can locate descriptive information in multi-lingual formats, and access to multimedia resources instantly, as well as relevant web resources, books and journal articles.

In addition to this, GMNet permits geographical searches, and enables users to create their own GMNet projects.

Building this kind of tool and populating it with content is a considerable task. Simmons GSLIS students and undergraduate students, as well as visiting researchers from China, Croatia and Vietnam, have worked under the supervision of Professor Chen to process content and tag it with the multi-lingual metadata necessary for effective search and retrieval as well as system development.

A new development from GMNet is a partnership agreement with UNESCO's World Heritage Center to use GMN technology to link together 830 World Heritage Sites from 138 countries (November, 2006).

Applications Beyond

Applications beyond the field are twofold: GMN is a valuable resource for researchers in many humanities disciplines. Images, videos, and maps can be viewed in context with extensive documentation. Collections can be searched according to a range of criteria, including region, object color or shape, or even random access within a collection or metadata fields. Users can zoom in on an object to examine details, create their own projects, and contribute their own content. Faculty who are teaching in related subject areas can use this application to augment their teaching, while students can use the images to augment their learning and presentations by logging into GMNet without having to create a PowerPoint presentation.

In addition, GMN serves as a model for faculty who are interested in creating online research tools and scholarly communities.