

# THE (MUSEUM) REVOLUTION WILL BE DIGITIZED

*Today's technology makes  
our history more accessible*

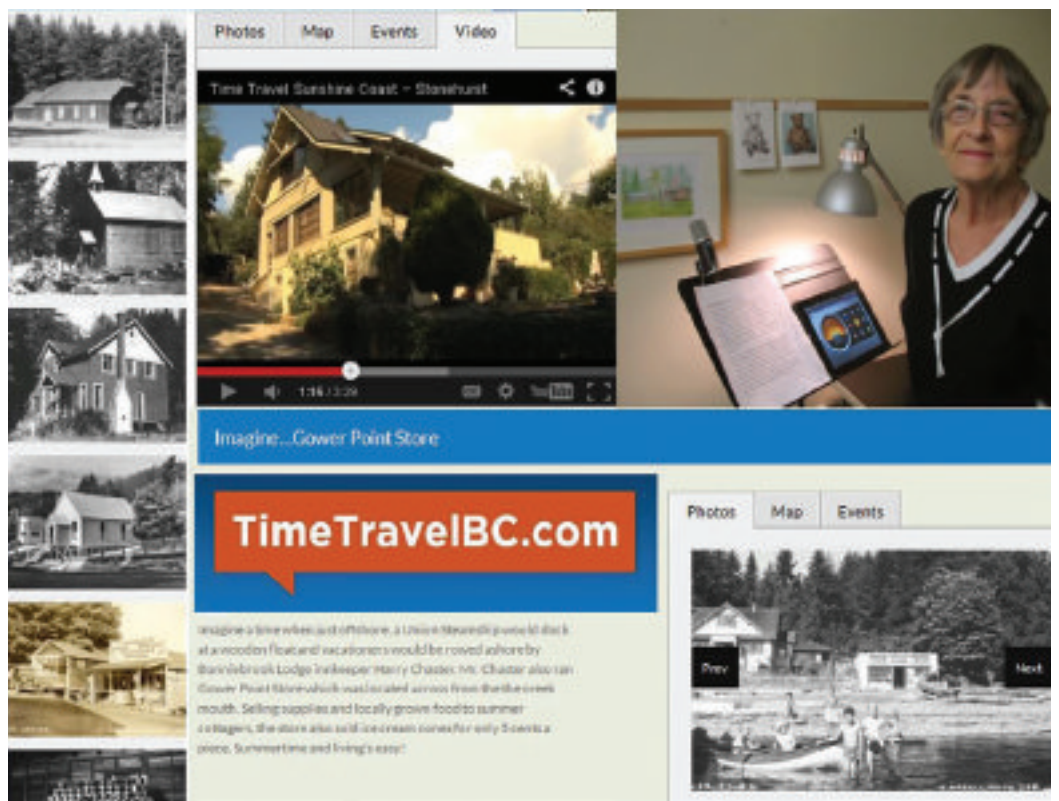
**C**an you feel it? The blurry eyes, stiff back and dazed mind of spending too many hours staring at your computer screen? The more time that we spend tapped into computer culture, the more that we will value the simpler pleasures of life — a fire on the beach, an afternoon spent gardening, or a meditative walk through a local art gallery or museum. In our day and age, museums skirt a fine line: to offer contemplative historical experiences while using digital technologies that allow for a deeper connection with collections. At the SCMA, we have been exploring mobile and web-based

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technologies to help bring local history to life and we invite you to come along for the ride. I must

warn you that the views may be inspiring and that you won't look at your community in the same way again.

In August 2012, we launched the Newspaper Digitization Project, a free online database of *Coast News* newspapers that is keyword and date searchable. This allows people to conduct historical research from the comforts of their own home, revolutionizing access to this valuable archival re-



source. At the launch event, we demonstrated the search functions of the database and asked the audience if there was any event or name that they would like to search for. A woman in her 80s raised her hand and said that she would like to search for news of her wedding that took place in the 1950s. Within two minutes, we had located the article and as we read it aloud, we were all transported back to her wedding day as the sights and sounds of the celebration filled our imaginations. While she beamed at the memory, we all smiled and wondered at the passing of time. It was a truly remarkable moment.

In October we launched Time Travel Sunshine Coast, a heritage walking tour that allows users to explore the fascinating histories of the Sunshine Coast on their mobile phones. At each of the 16 points of interest, text, audio/video and archival photographs from the Museum's collection reveal the historical significance of the site. This means that you can stand at Gospel Rock and access archival photographs of the biblical inscriptions that were once painted on the rock face, or go on a virtual tour of Stonehurst while standing outside the stately historic residence. A powerful learning experience is created when we use smart phones to facilitate heritage interpretation at relevant locations in the community.

Both of these projects serve to heighten interaction with local history by bringing archival content to life in new community contexts. The key to their success is that they create participatory experiences that provoke contemplation about an individual's place within a historical context. Our goal is to give you the tools to connect with the history of your community; how far you travel down the rabbit hole of history is up to you.

Coming up in the next year, we will launch Phase II of the Newspaper Digitization Project, making available the remaining years of the *Coast News* as well as the *Peninsula Times*. We will also begin to explore ways to augment our visitors' on-site experience by incorporating QR codes at exhibits. These codes will link to supplemental content about the artifacts and exhibits and help to create a more interactive museum experience.

In the end, digitization and the use of new technologies in the museum setting will provide better access and create new learning opportunities. However the traditional museum experience of engaging with real objects in real time will not be replaced; if anything, this type of experience will become more valuable in the future. It's all about balance — if we can harness the best that these technologies have to offer while provoking historical contemplation, we will be on the right path. **CL**