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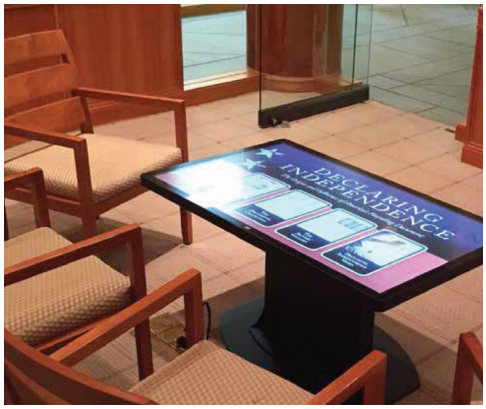
CASE STUDY

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE MUSEUM TABLE KIOSK

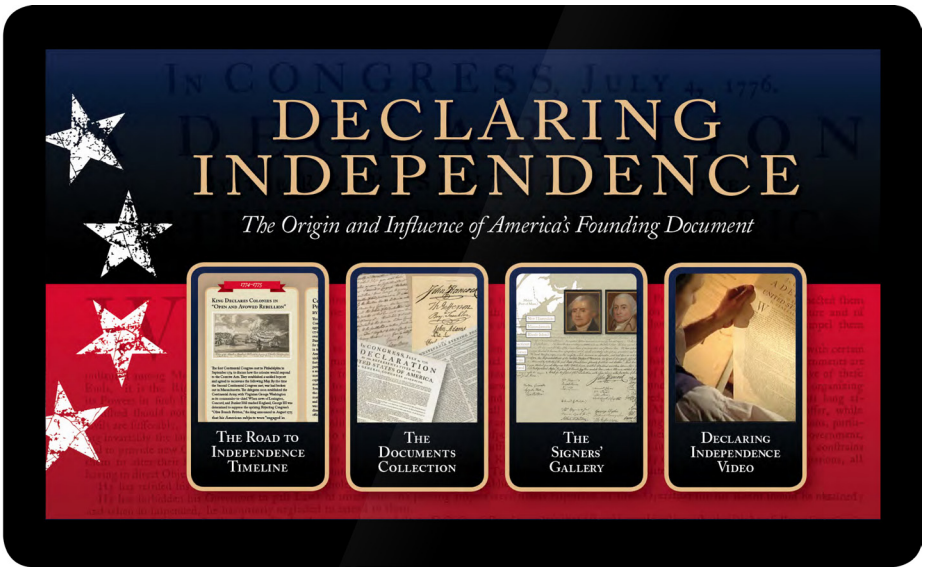


An interactive touch screen table at the Albert & Shirley Small Library offers an incredible glimpse into history via a custom application secured with kiosk software.

The Albert & Shirley Small Library at the University of Virginia houses a multi-room collection of documents and other materials related to the American Declaration of Independence. The collection features an interactive touch-screen table, running an application developed by Gibson Design Associates, which allows visitors to interactively explore both these rare documents and the history of their creation.

Creating Access to the Declaration of Independence Collection

This project for the Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library was managed by Jim Gibson at Gibson Design Associates. He worked closely with Robert Perkins, the University of Virginia Library's Associate Librarian for Philanthropy and Sean McCord, the library's Audio-Visual System Engineer. Rounding out the core team was Gibson Design's lead developer Christopher Gibson.



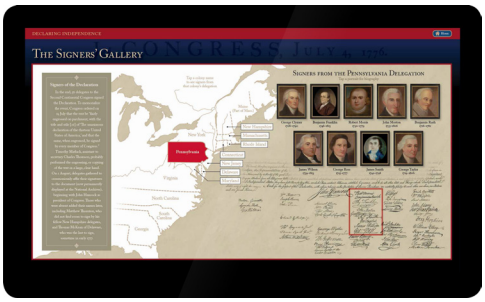
The construction of the library itself was supported by a generous gift from Albert & Shirley Small. From the beginning the plans included a two-room museum to house Albert Small's unique personal collection of memorabilia related to the American Declaration of Independence. The collection includes

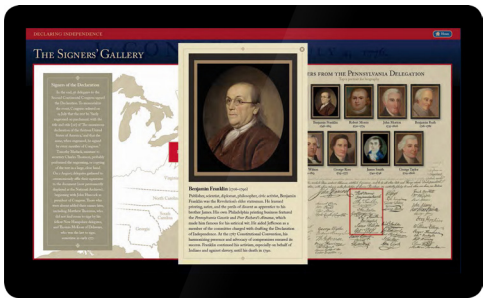
"This exhibit puts many of the items in the library's Declaration of Independence collection 'at the fingertips' of museum visitors in a powerful, interactive way. It is approximately three feet tall, which makes it a particularly nice way for young children to interact with materials that are otherwise displayed too high for them to easily view."

- Jim Gibson, Gibson Design Associates

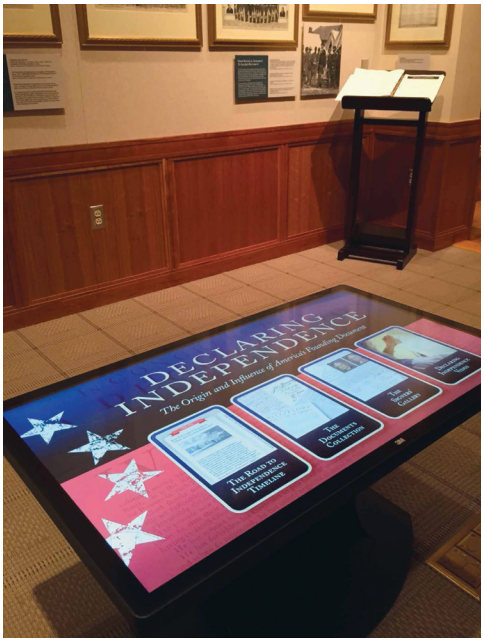
many versions of this historically significant document, including a rare "Dunlap" broadside which was printed just days after the declaration was approved. The museum also houses letters of the founding fathers, portraits of every signer of the declaration, and even a collection of later documents from all over the world that were inspired by the declaration.

In the museum, most of these documents are hung on the wall at eye level or higher, a setup that doesn't cater to—or attract the interest of—children. Therefore the library decided to create an interactive feature that would not only be appealing to adult visitors, but also make the contents of the museum accessible to a younger audience.





Gibson Design Associates won this project in part on the strength of having previously designed two coffee-table books about the American Declaration of Independence, one for the Library of Congress and a second about Albert Small's collection. Gibson Design Associates' extensive work for other institutions and historical sites was also an asset as they crafted this interactive table kiosk.



Technical Details and Project Specifications

The Declaring Independence Exhibit is a touch-enabled "coffee-table" that sits about three feet tall. The hardware is the Platform 46 Coffee-Table, purchased from Ideum (www.ideum.com). Their newest version of this interactive pedestal display is called the Ideum Duet 46.

The design and application functionality were developed by Gibson Design Associates using a robust combination of HTML 5, Javascript, and CSS. The application allows visitors to select The Road to Independence Timeline, The Documents Collection, The Signer's Gallery, and a professionally-produced Declaring Independence Video. The exhibit allows the viewer to "handle" these priceless documents—zooming in to view the tiniest details—in a way that is not possible with the originals.

The application is secured with KioWare Lite for Windows, running the Chromium browser (and supporting Chrome™). KioWare's features allowed Jim Gibson to focus on the functionality, design, and content of the custom application without having to consider security, malicious users, or visitors pushing the wrong button

ABOUT KIOWARE

KioWare kiosk software wraps around existing browser-based applications, securing the OS and browser, and allowing users to access only your application. KioWare is fully customizable with a product line ranging from basic browser-lockdown to server based remote monitoring.

ABOUT GIBSON DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Gibson Design Associates (gibsondesign.com) of Charlottesville, Virginia, is a design firm with a national clientele, having completed projects for the National Geographic Society, The Nature Company, The Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Congressional Quarterly Books, The National Geographic Traveler magazine, National Air and Space Museum, Time Life Books, and of course, Charlottesville's own University of Virginia and Thomas Jefferson Foundation.

ABOUT IDEUM

Ideum (ideum.com) is an innovative design company based in Corrales, New Mexico. The firm focuses on creating the next generation of visitor experiences that blend both the physical and digital realms. Along with its Creative Services software group, Ideum designs and produces integrated and hardened large-scale multitouch tables and touch walls for museums, educational institutions, government agencies, and Fortune 500 companies. It has developed multitouch tables and screens since 2008 and they have been sold in 37 countries.

ABOUT ALBERT & SHIRLEY SMALL

Albert & Shirley Small are longtime supporters of the University and the Library, Albert ('46) and Shirley Small made a substantial gift toward the construction of the special collections library that bears their name and houses Mr. Small's remarkable collection of autograph documents and rare, early printings of the Declaration of Independence.

and accessing the operating system or shutting down the application. With KioWare, library staffers do not spend time rebooting or "fixing" the interactive display, nor did Gibson Design Associates need to design security features into the application itself. According to Jim Gibson, "KioWare was integral to the success of the project, allowing us to expend our efforts on perfecting our design and providing superior functionality, rather than developing around every potential security hack."