

Phipps Conservatory: Member Card App

Executive Summary

Community Partners

Mary DeMars

Bob Mermelstein

Student Development Team

Kevin Chiu

Ian Go

Matthew Nielsen

Peter Podniesinski

Background

Phipps Conservatory is a large Victorian greenhouse located in Schenley Park. The botanical gardens at Phipps are made up of a variety of rotating exhibits as well as a standing collection. Phipps spreads knowledge about plants to its guests while providing them with an enjoyable and relaxing experience. Additionally, the organization has become a strong advocate for advanced green building practices, sustainable gardening, and a new environmental awareness. Phipps is proud to have over 12,300 members who help to support its organization.

Project Description

Project Opportunity

Members are an important part of the ecosystem at Phipps Conservatory. Membership sales are a strong revenue driver for the organization and member participation contributes to the vivacious atmosphere of the gardens. Members carry cards with them when they visit Phipps; cards are scanned when members enter in order to expedite the check-in process. However, sometimes members forget to bring their cards and paper member cards wear out over time, slowing down the check-in process. Could technology speed up this process?

Project Vision

In today's fast-paced world most Americans carry a smartphone everywhere they go. Smartphones provide a platform for mobile apps that are easy to use and contain rich information. Additionally, smartphones are rarely left at home and they do not wear out like paper. The goal of the Phipps Conservatory Member Card App was to design, develop, and deploy a smart replacement for Phipps' paper member cards. The app would not only provide an electronic member card, but give members the ability to change their information, see recent news, and download smartphone wallpapers.

Project Outcomes

With a strong project vision in mind, the student development team diligently worked to deliver on its goals. The result of a semester's-worth of work is a fully-functioning mobile app for iOS and

Android. The mobile app encompasses the features stated previously as well as an email-based member authentication system. Also, a web server was developed to allow dynamic content to be served to the mobile app. Considerable attention was given to making the features in the app relevant to users and easy to use so that when they visit Phipps the technology is as wonderful an experience as the gardens. Training was given to the staff at Phipps on how to use the mobile app and how to update information displayed in the app. We believe that this project will truly enhance the Phipps experience.

Project Deliverables

Upon completion of the Member Card App, it was distributed to the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store. As of this writing, both apps are awaiting review. The source code for the mobile app and the web server have been provided to Phipps Conservatory for future maintenance and development. Documentation on the entire system as well as an all-inclusive report have been delivered.

Recommendations

At the time of this writing the web server portion of the system had not been deployed to a production-level environment. Our recommendation to Phipps Conservatory is to move forward with a “soft” launch of the Member Card App into the hands of a few trusted users who could further test the software. After further testing and migrating the web server to a production environment a full-scale launch of the app would be appropriate.

Student Development Team

Kevin Chiu acted as codebase manager and full stack developer. He is a third-year student in the Information Systems department with a secondary major in Economics. Kevin is working at J.P. Morgan in New York City this summer.

Ian Go served as design lead and front-end developer. He is a third-year student in the Information Systems department with a secondary major in Human-Computer Interaction. This summer he will be working at the startup incubator Project Olympus to develop his mobile app, Flagtag.

Matthew Nielsen was the team’s sprint manager and back-end developer. He is a third-year student in the Information Systems department. Matt will be working on the Service Cloud at Salesforce in San Francisco during the summer.

Peter Podniesinski served as full stack developer. He is a third-year student in the Information Systems department and he will be pursuing a Masters in Information Systems Management. This summer Peter is working at Goldman Sachs in New York City.