

Archival Collections in an Object World



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Goal: Integrate archival material into museum systems

The Henry Ford has begun an exciting effort to digitize and provide access to its diverse collections. However, archives and museums have very different data models and standards, including levels of description and curation. One of the challenges of this project is unifying these differing data models and standards.

Challenge 1: Represent hierarchy in collection management system

Overview:

As part of the digitization effort, The Henry Ford is implementing a new collection management system (KE's EMu). Primarily designed for museum objects, methods for representing archival hierarchy had to be developed.

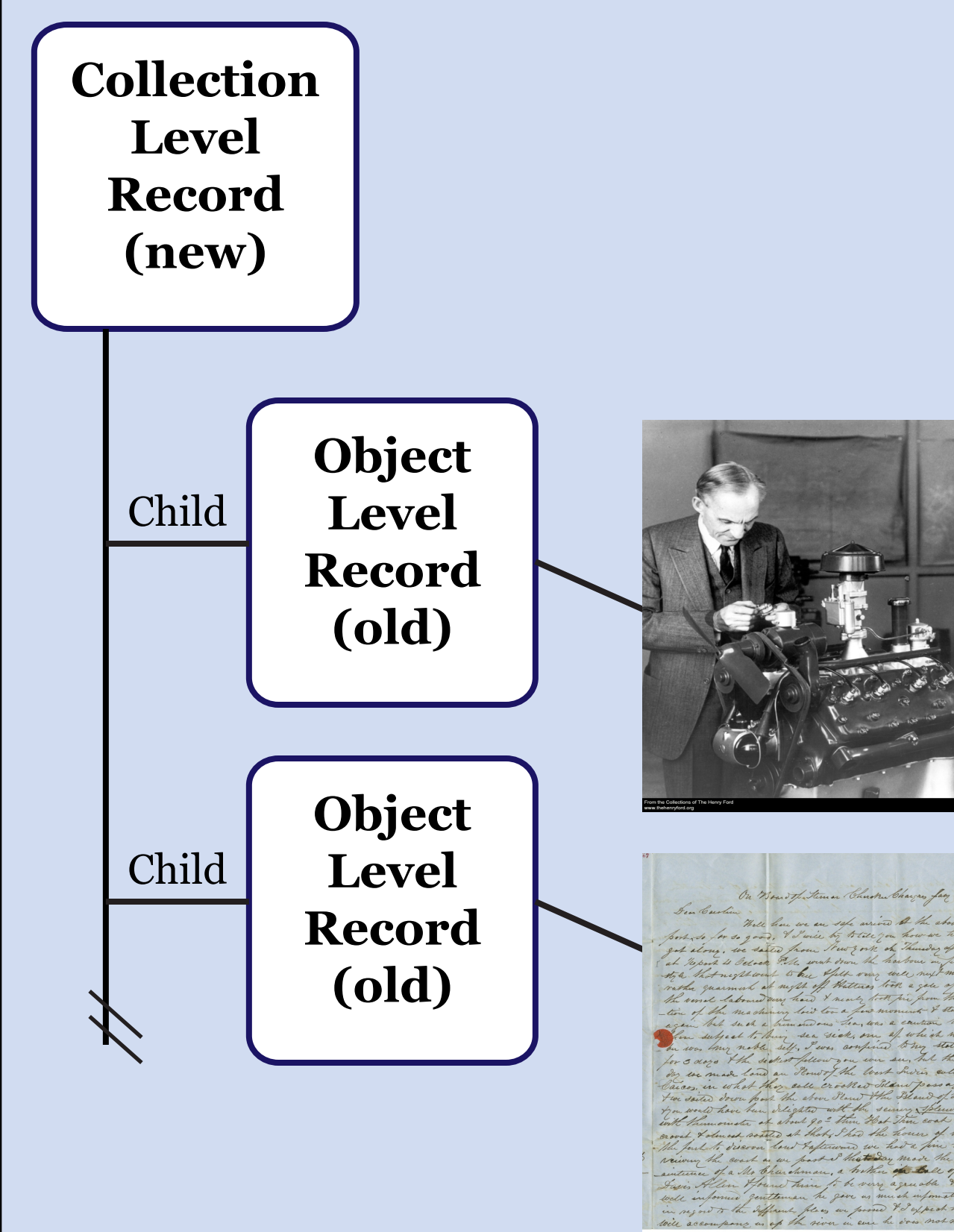
Research:

Because the institution is integrating archival materials more than other users of EMu, exemplars were difficult to locate. Research was based on testing in sandbox environments.

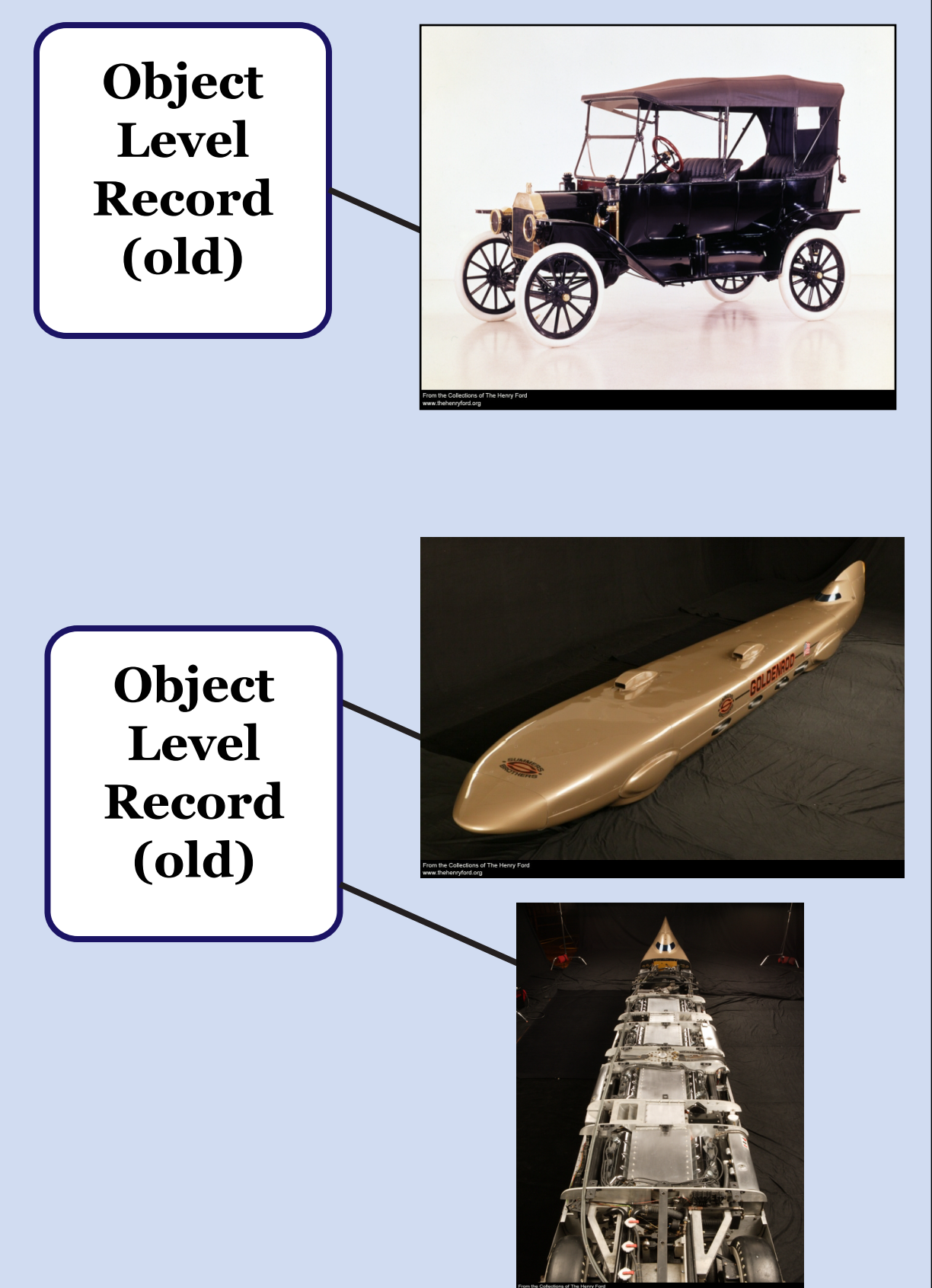
Status:

Testing showed that by using the system's parent/child functionality, collection level records can serve as a way to organize previously separate and individually described archival items. While integration is ongoing, creation of records in the production environment is achieving positive results.

Archives in EMu



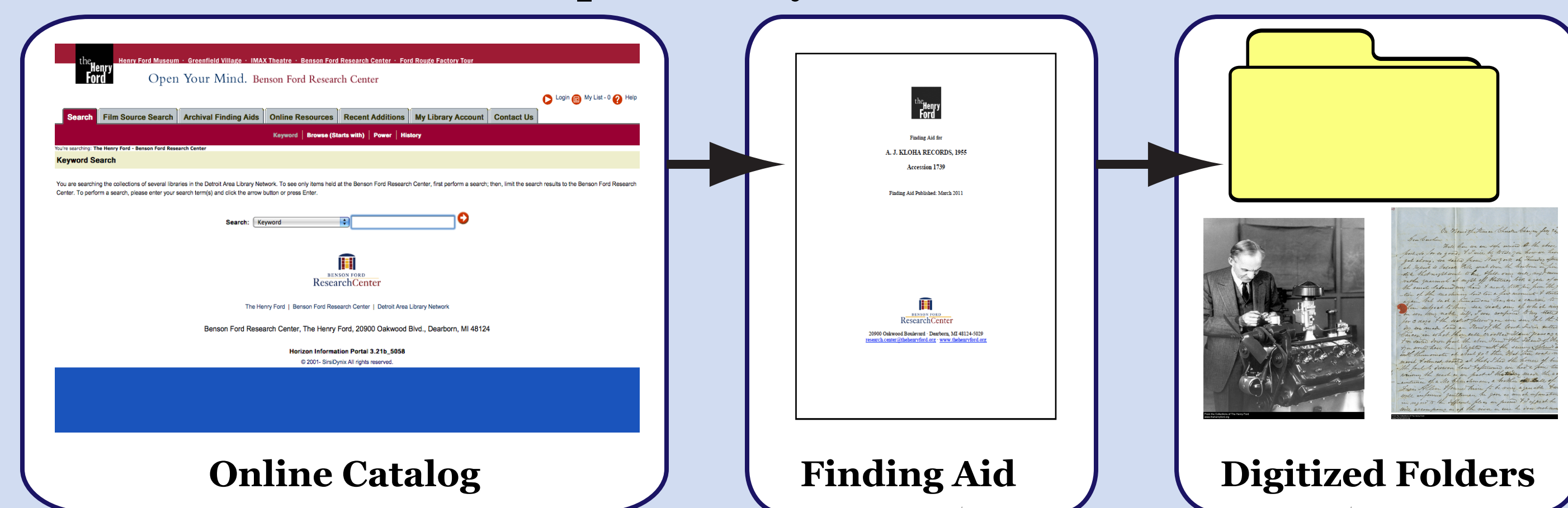
3D in EMu



Challenge 2: Deliver archival and museum materials together

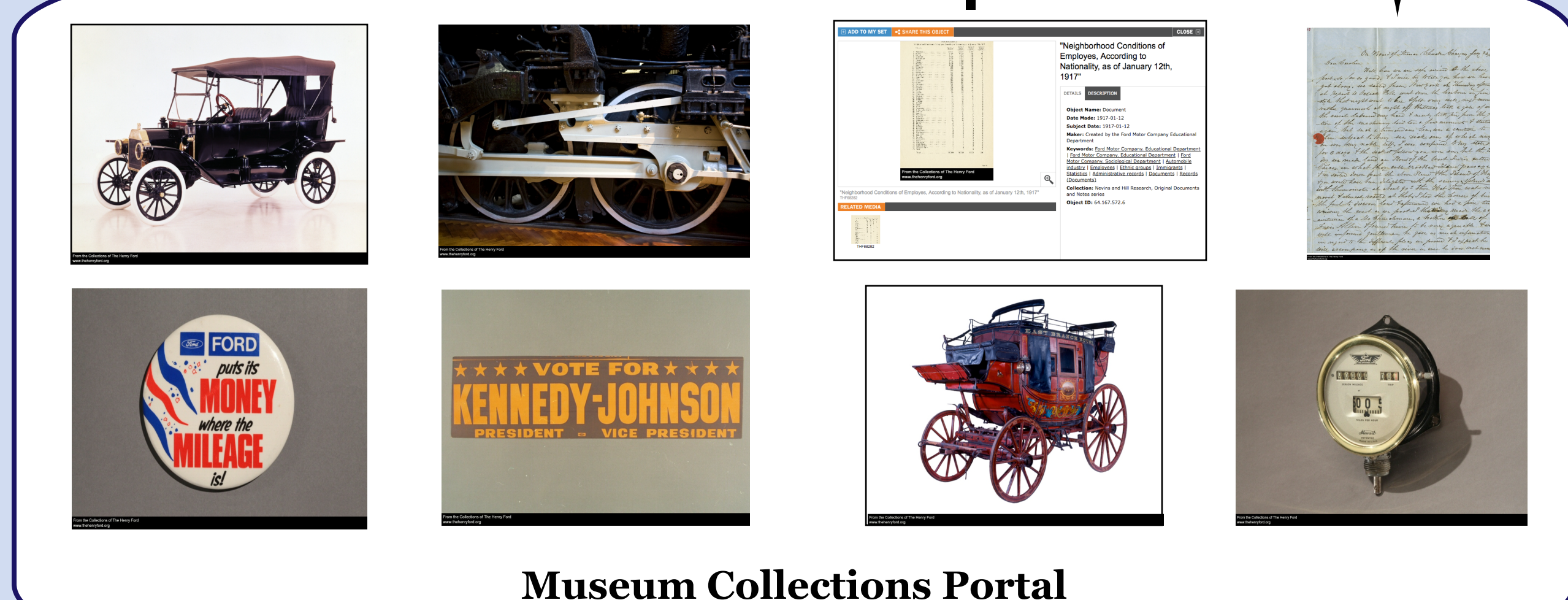
Archival Interface

- MARC record and finding aid driven
- Collection level description only



Primary Museum Interface

- Search across all records
- Item level description



Museum Collections Portal

Overview:

One of the major goals of the project is to have archival and museum objects findable and presented in a unified way. To attain this unification, the organization will determine how to best represent archival hierarchy and description alongside iconic historical 3D objects.

Research:

To date, research has consisted of searching for exemplars in archive, museum, and other LAM environments. Specifically, evaluating how institutions present collection vs. object level description, what role traditional finding aids play in mixed environments, and how searching is conducted across collections.

Status:

This work is ongoing. One possibility is the creation of an online presence where the majority of digitized archival materials (especially modern documents) are presented via a more traditional library/archive interface, with significant individual archival items and all archival collection level records co-existing in the primary museum interface. Both interfaces would have significant linkages.