Gold at the End of The Rainbow:
Redesigning UNC Charlotte's Goldmine Digital Collections Repository

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Introduction

In August 2019, UNC Charlotte Atkins Library Special Collections and University Archives (SCUA) launched a new interface for their Islandora digital collections repository, Goldmine. The redesign was the culmination of several years' worth of collaborative effort and improvements reflected user needs and best practices in user experience design. This poster will provide an overview of the collaborative design process, which was led by a working group of librarians and archivists with diverse backgrounds and implemented by the library's Technology and Digital Strategies team.

Figure 1: Old Goldmine home page

Background & History

Atkins Library first launched their Islandora repository in 2014, which they named Goldmine in reference to the University's athletics team nickname, the *49ers*, and mascot, *Norm the Niner*. Goldmine was established to replace UNC Charlotte's CONTENTdm site as the home for digitized and born digital materials from Special Collections & University Archives. During the first few years after the initial launch of Goldmine, members of SCUA and Atkins Library's Technology and Digital Strategies team focused on making back-end improvements to Goldmine, as well as optimizing cloud storage and ingest processes. A static image was added to the home page, but little else was done in the way of changing the look and feel of the website beyond adjusting settings through the web interface.

Goldmine Interface Group

The Goldmine Interface Group (GIG) formed in 2016 to begin working on overall recommendations to a redesign of the front end of the Goldmine repository. Members of the committee were archivists, librarians, and library employees at Atkins who had an interest in making the site better, but who weren't necessarily back-end users of the site or experienced in web design. The committee reviewed many other Islandora repositories and some other digital collections sites in order to decide what features and design elements to request for Goldmine. I paused the work of the committee in early 2017 due to a key loss of a Web Designer position, then we reconvened in 2018 after the position was reconfigured and filled.

Design Process

As the chair of GIG, I sought feedback from all members and from the library employees who would be implementing the design during this highly collaborative design process. The first stage, research, began in 2016. Initial research helped the group learn what they wanted in Goldmine and to create documentation of project outcomes. The committee worked with the Graphic & UX Designer to create mockups and web developers in Atkins Library to create specification documents with text and screenshots that described exactly what features they wanted to see in each area of Goldmine. The process was iterative; multiple revisions were made to documentation and mockups before Technology and Digital Strategies (TDS) created a functioning prototype site in spring 2019. After working with TDS to fix bugs, we launched the revamped site in August 2019.
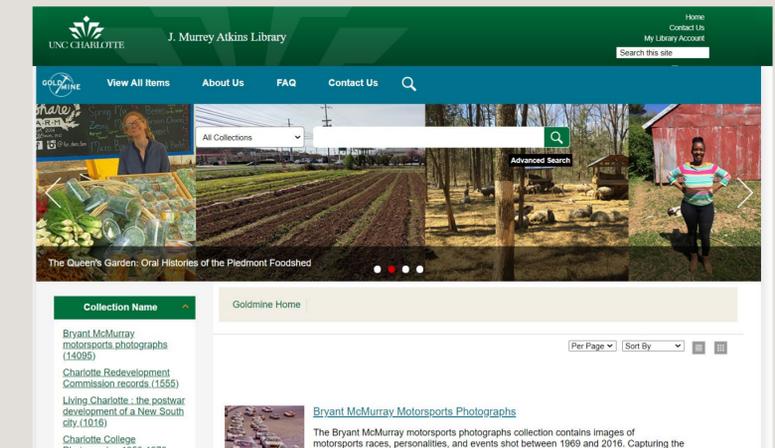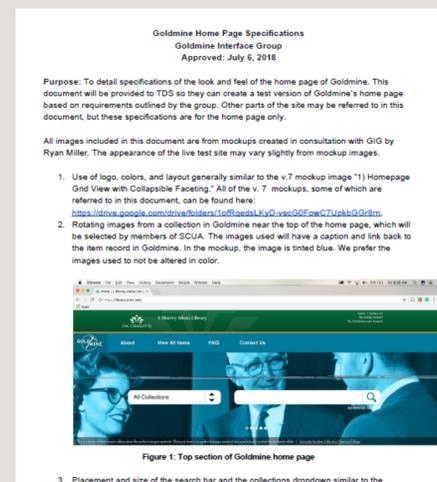

Figure 2: Specification document for the Goldmine home page

Redesign Key Features

Improvements introduced with the redesign of Goldmine's front-end include:

- Customized, updated look across the site, including logo and icons and a slider at top of the home page
- New left-side faceting panel that is present throughout Goldmine
- Navigation bar now present throughout site
- Advanced search no longer takes users to a separate page, and improvements to search results
- Ability to toggle through sets of images using "next" and "previous" buttons
- Ability for employees to turn on the ability to download images
- New About, FAQ, and Contact Us pages

Figure 3: Goldmine home page after redesign

Next Steps

Goldmine's new design provides the site with a unique look and feel and has introduced new features that librarians and archivists believe that our users want. Usability testing of the redesigned site, alongside other assessment tools, will help us find out if the site is meeting the needs of users and help us discover what problems users are encountering. Optimization for mobile devices was not fully considered in the redesign, so testing and making improvements to the mobile experiences is especially needed.

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