

Providing a cloud-based, single-source library and archive solution for the Marshall Foundation

THE GEORGE C. MARSHALL FOUNDATION USES SOUTRON FOR BOTH THEIR LIBRARY AND ARCHIVE MANAGEMENT SOLUTION

INTRODUCTION

The George C. Marshall foundation was established in 1953, the same year Marshall won the Nobel Peace Prize. Since then, the foundation has become the leading institution to document one of the most important Americans of the twentieth century.

To support that documentation effort, this world-class research library endeavors to ensure that Marshall's work and associated artifacts will inspire new generations to follow his example as they navigate the challenges of balancing war and peace.

CHALLENGE

The George C. Marshall research library serves everyone from grade schoolers to PhD students, and the library needs to make the library and archive materials freely available and locatable from anywhere in the world.

When the library was shut down due to COVID-19 the Foundation's librarian and archivist Melissa Davis knew she needed to provide better access to materials than the existing WordPress solution which had become so overloaded they were afraid it would crash.



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Melissa Davies, Director of Library and Archives
George C. Marshall Foundation



SOLUTION

Knowing the foundation needed to meet the research needs of a variety of users, Melissa researched what other similar organizations were using, heard about Soutron, liked what she heard during a product demonstration, checked references, and selected Soutron due to the product's flexibility. "I like how Soutron listens and services our small special library and archive," states Melissa.

Since every item (book, manuscript, audio, etc.) was a WordPress page, a database needed to be built out of the information contained in the body of the WordPress library page.

They had to decide what items to keep, what information on the page they wanted to retain and display, and from that create a coherent data tree of the organized materials, all the while keeping the goal of the research library and archive collections in mind: to meet everyone at their point of need and link them to the right resources.

As this work was undertaken, Melissa used her skills as an academic librarian and knowledge purveyor. Materials were organized into a catalog using modified LC subject headings with newly created metadata fields which were needed to make everything easily findable & understandable.

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“I am thrilled with the progress made with the new catalog,” states Melissa. “Work on getting these items into the catalog has been slow but steady due to the wonderful volunteers and interns who have been digitizing materials, adding subject headings and metadata.”

To meet everyone at their point of need, Melissa views her archivist cataloging activities to be similar to that of a knowledge curator, “I believe the work I am doing makes a difference in the world, exposing real history, some of it difficult. These are not just images and documents, but experiences and memories and secrets that have been entrusted to the library and archive. I need to take care of our collection materials and decide how to use and share an item in an intelligent manner.”

RESULTS

Taking advantage of Soutron's ease of customization, the new research library website's look & feel is consistent with the Foundation's website, resulting in a seamless flow between the Foundation's website and the research library, making the library catalog easy to access and less intimidating to use.

The screenshot shows the website header with navigation links like 'Life & Legacy', 'Research Library', and 'Articles & Features'. Below is a search bar and a list of search results. The first result is for 'GCM00272 General George C. Marshall receives oath of office as Secretary of Defense'. It includes fields for ID, Collection, Creator, Call Number, Subjects, Image Title, Physical Description, and Contact. A thumbnail image of Marshall is visible. Below the result is a table of record copies.

Record copies	Office	Location	Call Number	Copy Status
1	George C. Marshall Foundation	GCMF Library - Vault	GCM00272	In

“I respect the fact that the library's website is easy for me to update with weekly blog articles, helping me keep the website fresh and interesting,” states Melissa. “I wanted a simple search box, and am delighted that the result is clean, not complicated to use, and single search delivers results containing both library and archive materials.”

When a search is performed at the library, the customized results page gives the option of viewing the results in a grid or thumbnail view. Results are also organized by material type in tabs at the top of the results page that guide the researcher to all types of materials that are available that the researcher might not know about. Those guiding tabs make it easy for the researcher to see and access documents, photographs, books, audio, video, poster, or other materials that would provide more context to their research.

The result is that everything the foundation has on any subject is easily found. For instance, a search on Eisenhower will show a results page that isn't just a simple google-like listing of results, but also presents what format types the collection has available.

The screenshot shows a search results page with tabs for 'Documents', 'Photographs', 'Books', 'Audio', and 'Posters'. The 'Documents' tab is selected, showing a search result for 'Eisenhower against Himmler'. The result includes a thumbnail image of a poster with the text 'Eisenhower gegen Himmler!' and 'Himmler gegen Deutschland!'. It also shows the date '1944 - 1945' and the subject 'American Expeditionary Forces'.

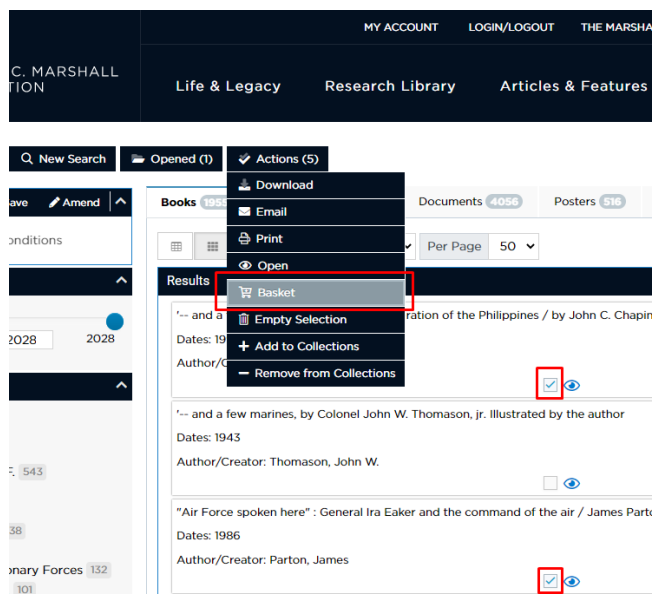
“I appreciate that Soutron is so customizable, and we didn't have to fit into someone's idea of what a library and archive should look like,” states Melissa.

Using the saved search functionality of Soutron, Melissa and her team of volunteers and interns created subject matter 'collections' finding aids for popular searches, eliminating the need for a researcher to recreate common subject matter searches. With these finding aids, researchers are presented with a curated collection of materials with a single click. Some collections are 1 single page or document, while others are hundreds of pages long, such as Marshall's work in China after WWII.

COLLECTION AND LIBRARY SERVICES MONETIZATION

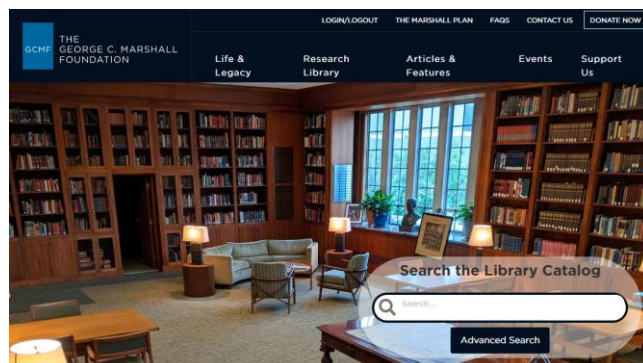
Recognizing the monetary value of the collection and the need for researchers worldwide to be able to purchase research materials along with research services, an embedded link in the record data links to a shopping page on the Foundation's main website, making it easy for the researcher to purchase if the item is available. Researchers can also download or email selected items in addition to saving items to their own reading lists / collections.

“Our research visitors can create a login, save searches, and place research items in their shopping basket without leaving the library website. In addition to providing an easy way for them to purchase materials and library services, this creates an informal literature review for long-term projects and finishing touches,” explains Melissa.



So far, the library has catalogued 35,000 books, created records for 12,000 photos which are being digitized on an as-needed basis, created records for 800 posters with 2000 more records to go, along with 200-300 maps which are also partially digitized.

Future plans are to scan large format Virginia Military Institute (VMI) maps and work with Soutron to import batch loads of similar items into the catalog. That is in addition to continuing to examine, catalog, and digitize the Marshall Foundation's collections, which are held in a 3,000 square foot three story building which houses the 500 collections, 35,000 books, 12,000 photos, 800 posters and more.



About Melissa Davis

Before becoming director of library and archives at the George C. Marshall Foundation, Melissa was an academic librarian specializing in history. She and her husband, John, have three grown children and live in Rockbridge County with three large rescue dogs. Melissa is known as the happiest librarian in the world! Keep up with her @MelissasLibrary or email her at librarian@marshallfoundation.org.

To find out more about the George C. Marshall Foundation and the range of collections and services available, visit their website for details: www.marshallfoundation.org.

To find out how you can migrate to a fast, secure, cloud based archive and library management system to support your organization, start a conversation with Soutron Global today: www.soutron.com