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Executive Summary

- The Warsaw Biblical Gardens were established in 1986 and are presently recognized as one of the largest and finest Biblical Gardens in the United States
- The Warsaw Biblical Gardens’ Board members identified a need to enhance the casual visitor experience by leveraging technology available today vs. sole reliance on pre-scheduled guided tours.
- Inclusion of the Garden in the 2010 Arts & Earth Trail sponsored by Kosciusko County will increase travel and tourism in Kosciusko County and the City of Warsaw and further increase the number of occasional visitors to the Garden who would benefit from self-guided, ad-hoc tours.
- Research resulted in a recommendation to use cell phone technology over other tour delivery alternatives based on ease of use and wide availability of cell phones in all age groups.
- The cost of cell phone technology is reasonable, tours are easy for the gardens’ staff to set up, and the technology can also provide critical visitor demographics not available today.



Introduction

The Warsaw Biblical Gardens began in 1986 as an idea from one individual. It has since emerged as one of the largest and finest Biblical Gardens in the USA. It is situated in the heart of Warsaw, IN. The gardens sit on approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ acre, and currently contain over one hundred plants referenced in the Bible. These gardens have been planted with every effort to achieve botanical and historical accuracy.

Gardens in the days of the Bible were places of beauty and tranquility and were used frequently for meditation. They were also a source for growing fruit, vegetables, and herbs to name a few. Plants performed a vital role in the Bible. It was with The Garden of Eden that the Bible began and it is with a vision of trees bearing fruit that it ends. In between, the Bible is a book filled with gardens and images of many plants.

Tall trees and a stone wall surround the gardens, providing a sense of enclosure. A meandering walkway allows for one to stroll through the gardens with leisure. The gardens are comprised of six microclimates that represent the main environments of which the Bible speaks. The **Meadow** is an open space in the center of the garden filled with flowers in season. A **Brook** flows through the garden passing through several of the microclimates along its way. The **Orchard** is filled with various fruits of the Bible, and has as its high point a unique handmade grape arbor. The **Forest** contains large shade trees and plants. The **Desert**, not far from the end of the Brook, provides a sampling of the drier environments and plants named in the Bible. The **Crops** area contains over thirty types of vegetables, herbs, and other useful plants. In addition, a large gathering area

provides a place for assembly. For those desiring a place of solitude, a sitting area with benches under two spreading oaks can be found in a more remote part of the garden.

Our KLA team mission

The purpose of this project is to enhance the experience of visitors to the Warsaw Biblical Gardens. This will be done through providing a system that will allow visitors to use a self-guided tour. Currently visitors must call ahead and set up an appointment for a guided tour. One of the problems with this approach is that many visitors are unaware of the requirement to call ahead. Current technology allows us to establish a better method of conducting group tours so that participants can hear, and also move through the gardens at a pace that is comfortable for them. Along with the improvements to the group touring, individual visitors to the gardens can access a prerecorded tour script. As part of the Arts and Earth trail for Kosciusko County many more visitors are expected. So offering an alternative self-tour through the gardens would benefit the gardens along with the visitors.

The Warsaw Biblical Gardens is one of the largest and finest Biblical Gardens in the US and as such provides significant relevance to Kosciusko County¹. Offering an enhanced tour experience through these gardens, at the leisure of each and every visitor, will have a positive impact on our local economy by increased generation of travel and tourism in the county.

This project is achievable with current funding through the Warsaw Biblical Gardens. Due to the ease of use, set up and relatively low cost this project is fully sustainable, and visitors to the gardens should have many options as to how they want to spend their time there.

Research of alternative methods of self-guided tours

Several alternative methods were researched to effectively provide tour information on a self-guided basis. The first such method was through the use of weather-proof, vandal-resistant kiosks. A kiosk is a stand-alone information center. The user would activate the multi-function touch keypad to activate the kiosk to relay the desired information to the user. The amount of information that can be relayed through the kiosk system is endless. However, cost was a primary factor in not further pursuing this avenue. The cost of one such kiosk is in the neighborhood of \$9000 per unit, and this does not account for maintenance and power usage. In addition, the use of kiosks would disrupt the serenity and tranquility of the gardens.

A second method researched was the use of MP3 players. This system would also effectively provide a self-guided tour. The initial cost was reasonable; however the information area of the gardens would need to be consistently staffed in order to provide the necessary MP3 players to guests. The cost of replacement and maintenance was high, and not a viable option at this time.

A third method researched was through the use of wireless headsets and microphones. This did not fit into our original model of self-guided tours because of the staffing required to give the tours. The lack of trained tour guides available limits this option as well.

The next method researched was the use of interactive audio players embedded in the environment of the gardens. Sensors would activate the use of these players. A drawback to this method would be the disruption of the tranquility of the gardens every time someone walked past a sensor, causing the audio to activate continually.

The final method researched was the use of cellular technology. This system would enable anyone with a cell phone to use the gardens at any time, and the cost is just under \$4000 per year. This is a very cost effective way to reach multiple users simultaneously and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. A few important features include ease of use by the visitor, ease of system set up and maintenance, customizable tour lengths, and a cell phone donation feature allowing visitors to donate funds to the gardens via their cell phone.

In order to assess the viability of this option we analyzed usage statistics for the Warsaw Biblical Gardens and it appears that approximately 600 visitors toured the gardens in 2009 through organized guided tours. The age of the attendees ranged from 30-90 years old with the average age being in the 62-66 years of age range. Looking at some cell phone statistics, nearly 90% of Americans have at least one cell phone. A further breakdown by age group showed that over 92% of Americans less than 45 years of age have a cell phone and slightly over 80% of Americans older than 45 years of age have cell phones². Each year numbers of cell phone users continue to increase for all the age groups, making the use of cellular technology for self-guided tours an excellent alternative.

A viable tour system that is accessible, affordable and flexible

In further researching specific providers of cellular technology, we discovered OnCell Systems, which has a local representative in Winona Lake. OnCell Systems features include:

- ◆ Flexible and scalable with 24/7 coverage year round including holidays.
- ◆ Self-serving interface that is easy to build and update.
- ◆ Not limited to audio. Pictures, video clips, text coupons, GPS hunts, interactive quiz, MP3 downloads, and web links are all available using this technology.
- ◆ The ability to track results and demographic data, administer surveys, tap social networks, and hear real-time visitor comments.
- ◆ Options to generate revenue with advertisements from sponsors and cell phone donation functionality.

This system is easily accessible from any cell phone by dialing a special access number for The Warsaw Biblical Gardens. Once connected, users simply follow the easy menu options. The current recommended package carries an annual fee of \$3990 and a onetime set-up fee of \$1000.

Future growth

OnCell Systems allows for future growth by providing easy access to menu program changes.

Increases in the number and length of tours available are done by a simple process via a

designated system administrator who can alter the tour configurations and length as needed. It

also allows for a nearly unlimited amount of visitors to use the system at any one time. The

OnCell technology also allows for the availability of podcasts that can be posted on the Biblical

Gardens website for download, along with being included on MP3 players in the future as growth

permits.

Conclusion

At the March 10, 2010 Warsaw Biblical Gardens' Board of Directors meeting, we presented the

options researched and our recommendation to use OnCell Systems as the future self-guided

tour systems for the Gardens. At that meeting, the Board accepted our recommendation,

approved the expenditure to use of this technology, and signed a contract with OnCell Systems to

put in motion this enhanced tour experience. The ongoing expense for this venture will fit easily

into the Gardens' annual budget and is expected to provide exceptional ease of use to many

visitors for years to come.



Sources

1 – WCDC (Warsaw Community Development Corporation)

2 – <http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/newslog/Cell+Phone+Usage+Continues+To+Increase+In+The+USA.aspx>