The Children's Museum of Oak Ridge

Promises, Purpose, and Partnership

ARCHIVERA
Success Story

THE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM OF OAK RIDGE CHALLENGES

- **Public access**
- **Software-as-a-Service (SaaS)**
- **Technology in perpetuity**
- **Automated import**
- **Minimal training**

"The ArchivEra team understood the historical importance of our collection and mission; their response to our needs was intuitive as well as substantive, and they knew they'd be partnering on something really important. Aware that we have a small budget, they worked with us to structure a contract. Signing it was the best thing we ever did."

Rhonda Bogard
Project Lead
Weinberg Archive Project

The Children's Museum of Oak Ridge (CMOR) is located in a 54,000 ft2 historic building that was originally built as an elementary school during the Manhattan Project in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. It includes indoor and outdoor exhibits, as well as offering classes, camps, and events for all ages. Its mission is to "provide fun and diverse educational programs and exhibits emphasizing play and hands-on learning for all ages in arts, science, history, culture, and healthy living, while collecting and preserving objects in a historic Manhattan Project community."

Dr. Alvin Weinberg, an Oak Ridge physicist, helped design the world's first nuclear reactors and was an integral part of the Manhattan Project. He served as the director of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory from 1955 until 1973, and then founded the Institute for Energy Analysis at Oak Ridge Associated Universities

(ORAU). That same year Selma Shapiro became the first director for the Children's Museum of Oak Ridge. Ms. Shapiro saw the museum through two buildings, hundreds of exhibits, and 30 years of teaching the city's history. She became friends with Weinberg, who shared her values, particularly with regard to the importance of education outside the classroom.

THE PROMISE

When Alvin Weinberg retired from Oak Ridge Associated Universities, he donated his personal papers (over 250,000 pages) to Selma Shapiro, as director of the Children's Museum of Oak Ridge, for safekeeping. Ms. Shapiro promised him she would protect his papers and keep them accessible. There were scientists who came to the museum and accessed the collection for their research. After 30 years, museum staff wanted to permanently archive and re-inventory the collection and minimize the direct handling of the paper. Ms. Shapiro's daughter, CMOR Advisory Board member Ms. Rhonda Bogard, is carrying her mother's promise forward, leading the effort to archive and digitize Alvin Weinberg's papers.

Alvin Weinberg was known world-wide as a pioneer in reactor design and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. He was also a member of the Oak Ridge community for 60 years and became one of the city's most revered citizens. He participated in many initiatives such as the Oak Ridge International Friendship Bell and was the most famous man to ever have lived most of his life in Oak Ridge.

"He personified everything that Oak Ridge is about: science, ingenuity, and creativity," Ms. Bogard said. When he retired in 1986, he gave CMOR 17 file cabinets and 30 boxes of his personal papers, which have both scientific and historic meaning. The collection is unique in its size, its nature, and its author.

THE PROJECT

CMOR's current director, Beth Shea, knew the museum needed to develop a strategy for how to preserve the collection in perpetuity. Ms. Bogard has experience working with large historical databases

and digitization projects and agreed to lead the Archive project. Since the museum staff size is very small, Ms. Bogard put together a team of volunteers ranging from a core team of eight to a full team of 16, with representatives from science and historical sectors and staff archivists from the University of Tennessee. They planned the project, then initiated fundraising, hired a part-time archivist to do the hands-on archival work, and later embarked on a collections management system evaluation and selection.

"We put together a requirements list, and everything we needed, ArchivEra met. The longevity of the company and the robust technology inspired confidence that the platform is one that will be supported in perpetuity," Ms. Bogard said.

As they were deciding how best to present the Weinberg Collection publicly, they looked for a solution that was cost-effective, delivered via software-as-a-service (SaaS) because they have no paid IT staff to manage their own server, and one that could offer enough storage for their large collection. Initially drawn to Open Source solutions, they became doubtful that an OSS application could manage their storage requirements, and concerned about the requirement for in-house technical expertise or consultants, which is a key pitfall of OSS implementation and ongoing maintenance. They began to consider a purpose-built and vendor-supported solution. Through an archivist at the University of Tennessee, they were introduced to, and ultimately selected, ArchivEra.

"With the help of Lucidea's Client Services team, we completely automated the ingestion/import process of PDFs and metadata with total data accuracy and integrity," said Mr. Harold Ketterer, Project Database Administrator. Ms. Bogard and Mr. Ketterer agree that due to sheer volume of content, they could not have completed the data load without the automation enabled by ArchivEra.

One of the features of ArchivEra is its flexibility. CMOR is using ArchivEra's "Featured Collections" tab a little differently than most clients. They use it to showcase individual documents, almost as "teasers" that invite visitors to explore further. Because of Weinberg's broad interests, there is so much that visitors and researchers can find in over 1400 files containing his documents; they're not all just about science, often they document history, and they aren't intimidating. The online search capability, including 350 pre-identified subjects (key words), make this remarkable collection accessible to all levels of users.

"Every file in the collection takes you on a journey," Ms. Bogard said.

Mr. Ketterer is very happy with the user experience as the database is simple to use.

"It is very friendly and makes it easy to navigate the database with minimal training," Mr. Ketterer said. "The Finding Aid, with its live links that drop users off exactly where they want to be, is very helpful and one of the many great benefits of ArchivEra—and the software's metrics show that most people start there."
Ms. Bogard and Mr. Ketterer agree that there is so much potential

with ArchivEra to further enhance the user and administrator experience themselves, including with advanced searching and reporting.

The due diligence and implementation process was a partnership between CMOR and the ArchivEra team.

"I have never been so well taken care of in any project," Ms. Bogard said. "The software itself is excellent, and no software that I've implemented has ever been as easy and straightforward as this. At Lucidea, they really understand, from a user's perspective, what works and what doesn't." From the database administrator perspective, Mr. Ketterer tells us he most appreciates "the quick turnaround, either giving us exactly what we needed or telling us why we should take a different approach. I have a lot of experience with IT support, and this is top of the line."

THE PARTNERSHIPS

Over time, it is their hope that there will be increasing opportunities to leverage ArchivEra to partner with other organizations or educators. Because Weinberg's interests cross so many disciplines, there is potential for STEM projects. A permanent exhibition is planned at CMOR, with the means to reach multiple generations. One of Weinberg's notable phrases was BIG SCIENCE. He was a proponent of gathering teams from various disciplines to work on problem areas that affect the world, such as climate change, energy independence, clean water, and effective education. The collection and the exhibition can serve as a resource to teach collaboration. There is also the potential to partner with other historical collections in the area since Oak Ridge is part of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park.

CMOR opened the collection to the public in March, sharing Weinberg's collection with the community and the world—keeping a promise. They have enjoyed an extremely positive response to the collection, affirming what Weinberg would have predicted: "The current generation still cares... and future generations will too!"

*To access the online collection: **http://bit.ly/digitalweinberg***

ABOUT LUCIDEA

Lucidea provides unrivaled archival collections management software, with innovative tools based on observing archives of all sizes for 25 years. Lucidea's powerful web-based CMS, ArchivEra, is purpose-built, enabling archives large, small, or middling to describe and provide access to historical materials, save time and resources, and adhere to archival standards.

To learn more about ArchivEra and how it can help solve your archival collections management challenges, visit **lucidea.com/archivera**

CONTACT LUCIDEA

☎ **1-604-278-6717**   ✉ **sales@lucidea.com**   🌐 **www.lucidea.com**