

# case study

## American Family Immigration History Center at Ellis Island

### HIGHLIGHTS

#### THE NEED

- State-of-the-art interactive technology systems design and integration
- Simple access for thousands of non-technical end users.
- Maintain integrity of historic site

#### THE SOLUTION

- Network designed for custom software
- Hardware selected to handle volume and end-user "abuse"
- Liaison between all contractors to identify potential pitfalls and guarantee project integrity

#### THE RESULT

- Thousands of visitors have easy, interactive access to immigration records that are over 100 years old
- Systems infrastructure handles all aspects of research and point-of-sale needs
- Documentation and staffing plan for ongoing support

### the organization

The American Family Immigration History Center™ (AFIHC) is an exciting new family genealogy facility developed by the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation, Inc. Housed in the Ellis Island Immigration Museum. The Center is also accessible via the Internet. In the year 2000, over 113 million Americans were engaging in family history research, and this innovative center was created to provide guidance to both adults and children in the fascinating task of tracing one's roots.

### the need

The American Family Immigration History Center pulls together detailed information on the more than 17 million people who immigrated through the port of New York from 1892-1924, the peak years of Ellis Island processing. The data was taken directly from the ships' passenger manifests, which are currently on microfilm at the National Archives and Records Administration. These valuable documents were, after many years, digitized and entered into an electronic database for easy access.

Square One was contracted to work with R/GA, the software developer, and Edwin Schlossberg Inc.(ESI), the general program manager, to provide systems integration and project management services. AFIHC at Ellis Island required state-of-the-art interactive computer technology and high-level systems design to bring this historic information to the visitor's fingertips. Square One shared two important mandates with the project management team at ESI and R/GA – to ensure that the end-user technology experience is both simple and rewarding, and to create a systems infrastructure that is easy to manage and maintain. In addition, the exhibit required a Point of Sale (POS) system to handle all visitor transactions.

### the solution

Square One worked with R/GA to provide a complete hardware and network spec that would meet the very specific needs of the custom designed software. The landmark status of the Ellis Island Great Hall made the installation of a modern network infrastructure

closely with the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation, ESI, R/GA, and the National Parks Service to evaluate specialized technologies and to complete the installation to meet all project goals, while at the same time respecting the historic significance and integrity of the site. To ensure project continuity, Square One also stepped in to act as the technical liaison to the general contractor, the electrical contractor, the furniture manufacturer, the architect and other key project leaders. Square One was able to identify potential pitfalls, both within and outside of our scope, and provide sound technology solutions.

### the result

The American Family Immigration History Center is now using state-of-the-art interactive computer technology to make available to its visitors the immigration records of ancestors who came to this country as long as a century ago. Square One completed installation of the workstation, server and network infrastructure that handles all aspects of research, documentation and output for the exhibit. A (POS) system was also implemented which ties into the main exhibit system.

Square One followed up by documenting the entire technology installation and outlining a staffing plan to support the center. Square One is providing training to ensure efficient operations once the systems are turned over to the internal staff. Square One has outlined an ongoing retainer solution to ensure that a support mechanism is in place for higher-level technical issues or for upgrades to the existing technology.

Visitors now have the opportunity to research their own family's immigration history and receive printouts of items such as an original ship's manifest or photograph. In addition to obtaining information about one's ancestors, visitors can build a "scrap book" by scanning additional photos, records and other personal information to complete their family history.



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