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Case Study | St. Edward's University

PROFILE

NAME: St. Edward's University
LOCATION: Austin, TX
WEBSITE: https://www.stedwards.edu/

CHALLENGE

How to support the new campus vibrancy initiative at St. Edward's University through the use of technology.

SOLUTION

The university created immersive, interactive art installations and events to engage students and generate excitement. Epson Pro L Laser projectors were used to confidently hold projection mapping events following students' participation in a projection mapping workshop.

Where technology meets art: Projection mapping with Epson laser projectors' incredible image quality drives campus vibrancy initiative

Located in Austin, Texas, a city known for its culture, music and vibrant atmosphere, St. Edward's University's IT department was tasked with helping the university come up with ideas to support its campus vibrancy initiative in order to grow a sense of community within its students. The department also wanted to showcase how technology could be used to support other disciplines – especially art.

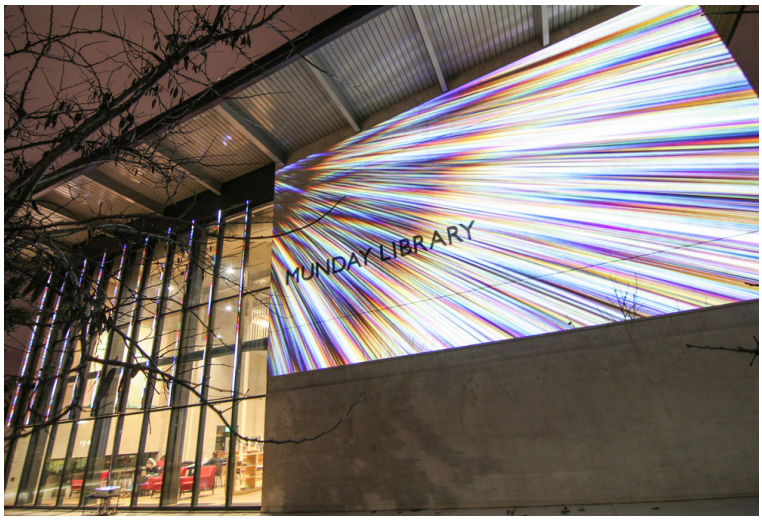
"The initiative was about finding a way to enrich the lives of students and take technology beyond its original uses," said Jason Arellano, user services manager in the university's office of information technology. "Technology is seen by some as on a completely different spectrum as art. Being a liberal arts school we wanted to show how to tie the two together. We had the curriculum in our minds, but needed to get it from an idea to conception."

Moving from an idea to a reality

St. Edward's University is a 4,300-student, private Catholic university. At the time of the campus vibrancy initiative, the university had already been an Epson partner for more than five years. About 80 percent of its 120 classrooms and conference rooms are outfitted with Epson projectors. So when the campus vibrancy initiative was launched, Arellano and his colleague Tony Chavez, IT strategist and enterprise solutions architect, immediately thought of Epson because of its precision engineering and incredible brightness and accuracy.

"We've loved the educational benefits, price point and overall quality of Epson projectors, especially with the new laser models," said Arellano.

After a serendipitous meeting in a coffee shop, Arellano partnered with two local artists, Theron Pray and Noah



Photography by Theon Prey

Wight, who specialize in projection mapping, LED exhibits, and using technology to create interactive art installations. The team created two impressive, successful projects at St. Edward's University – the Munday Library projection mapping project, and the St. John's Bible event. For both projects, Epson's Pro L laser projectors were a critical component because their sharp images and vibrant colors create an exceptional visual experience.

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>
> - JASON ARELLANO, USER SERVICES MANAGER

Projection mapping on the Munday Library building

The first big project for the campus vibrancy initiative focused on large-scale projection mapping. The team used a 25,000 lumen Epson laser projector and set it up in a third-floor office across the lawn from the Munday Library building. This extremely bright projector with matching color and white brightness allowed them to essentially light up an entire 50-foot section of the concrete exterior and project interactive images onto the wall.

The artists held workshops for interested students to have them work with programs like MadMapper, TouchDesigner, and Synesthesia (a software created by Pray) in order to create interactive images and graphics that were then projected onto the front of the building. Combined with three laptops and a portable desktop computer, the projector confidently brought students' concepts to life. The artists also put LED strips on the building's 20-foot windows and used the Arduino platform to create even more spectacular visuals. The artists even connected gaming controllers to the computers via Bluetooth, allowing students and visitors near the building to "paint" on the building's wall.

The project took place during Homecoming weekend and it was a huge success. Students could project large silhouettes of themselves onto the building or play a video ping pong game using the building wall as their screen. Some of the interactive images made it appear as if the Munday Library sign on the building was melting, or that the building was engulfed in a storm. The wall of the library essentially became a giant canvas.

The IT team and the artists were particularly impressed by the Epson projector because of its color vibrancy, brightness and ability to project a true black. "The great thing was the projector was just awesome and did everything we threw at it," said Chavez.

"It was probably the best projector we've ever seen," added Wight. "Usually we get more grays. But up there the screen was black. You wouldn't even notice anything was there. Definitely the colors were amazing. It was the best projector I've ever used."

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>
> - TONY CHAVEZ, IT STRATEGIST AND ENTERPRISE SOLUTIONS ARCHITECT

St. John's Bible

For the next event, the university partnered with the same artists to create 360-degree immersive imagery inside of a theatre during a lecture about the St. John's Bible. The St. John's Bible is a hand-written, hand-illuminated Bible that took 10 years to illustrate, and was being housed at St. Edward's University for a year. The university-artist team used five Epson Pro L-Series laser projectors edge-blended together to display seamless images on every wall and ceiling of the 300-seat theatre.

By using the powerful HDBaseT Input option Pray was able to create the mapping and control each projector's settings conveniently from one central location. Images of stained glass windows were projected onto the interior walls giving the illusion that the building was a church. Then, scenes and illustrations from the Bible were projected onto the walls so the audience could see them on a large scale. Music was added to create an even more immersive experience.

Involving the students

For both events, Pray and Wight conducted workshops with students to teach them how to use the software and equipment that would be involved in the art installations. To start out, students got kits including Arduinos and LEDs and built sound reactive LED bars. In another workshop, students learned how to do projection mapping on different objects.

The students loved it, said Wight. “They were really into learning how it worked and had a lot of questions about how we were doing it. That’s the point. Often when you see these projects you don’t see what goes on behind the scenes. We wanted to show students what it takes and how they could do it themselves.”

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St. Edward’s University is pleased at the success of the Munday Library and St. John’s Bible projects and plans to do more projects like these in the future as it continues its campus vibrancy initiative. By leveraging Epson’s equipment, projection mapping software and utilizing the talents of local artists and their own students, the university is succeeding in creating a vibrant, exciting atmosphere on campus that showcases the intersection of art and technology.

“From our standpoint with campus vibrancy, this is just something that campuses do, and it’s something we should be doing more of,” said Chavez. “It was successful here because we had people who believed in the project.”

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