

# Beyond The DOOH Screen

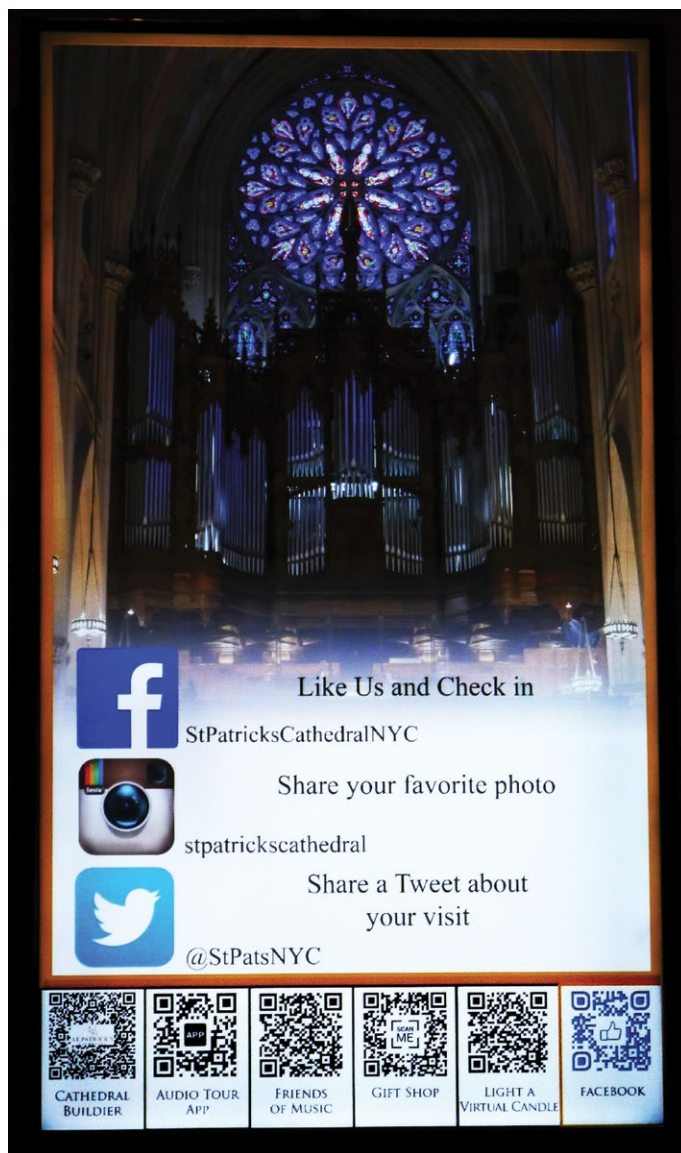
Mobile and social media extend reach.

By Shonan Noronha, EdD

Mobile connectivity is rapidly becoming a major gateway to information about faith-based activities, from access to streamed services and event schedules to donations for worthy causes. Social media works in parallel with smartphones to rapidly spread the word and increase participation in religious services, concerts and community events. At many worship centers, digital signage is used to direct the faithful and visitors to information about the institution's website.

Many organizations first set up a website before making an investment in digital signage. When these worship centers undertake an expansion of their AV systems, they may also be ready to deploy digital signage. One example is St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City, which established an online presence more than a decade ago. After installing Cat5 and fiberoptic cabling for digital media, the cathedral set up a digital signage network more than a year ago.

Discussing the cathedral's online and social media initiatives, Kate Monaghan, Campaign Communications Director for the restoration of the cathedral, stated, "The Mission of the Church is to share the Gospel, and maintaining a robust online and digital presence is a very important aspect of sharing the Good News in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As a practical matter, we use our website to inform parishioners and visitors about the Mass



Signage at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City links viewers to additional information.

schedule, reception of the sacraments, special liturgies, concerts and so on." With regard to the cathedral's Facebook, Instagram and Twitter links, Monaghan noted, "We have a responsibility to meet people where they are, and many are on social media platforms."

The cathedral's digital signage system consists of premium components, including four Samsung 65-inch commercial-grade LCD flatpanels, Chief wallmounts, Seneca Data media players and Scala's CMS. "At this time, only four screens are part of the signage network, but additional screens can be incorporated by adding media players at the screen location,"

said Michael Starobin, Vice President of Tele-Dynamics Voice & Data, who designed the system. "I chose this configuration based on Scala's long, respected history in the industry. The software and distribution system is all cloud-based and very simple to use. The reliability is impressive, with virtually no downtime since installation over a year ago. The players only download content changes, making bandwidth utilization low, and content continues to play even if the data connection is lost. Other considerations were flexible hardware interoperability and, of

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## SIGN AGE: BEYOND THE DOOH SCREEN

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course, excellent, smooth subpixel motion. We also used Seneca Data media players, an excellent product manufactured in New York State,” Starobin explained.


Ease of use is a significant factor, particularly in house of worship (HOW) applications. The NY archdiocese staff frequently updates the content for display on signage screens and the website. Below the

content zone reserved for dynamic media are QR codes, such as Cathedral Builder, Audio Tour App, Friends of Music, Gift Shop and Light a Virtual Candle, linking the user to additional information and activities.

Although the costs for deploying and maintaining digital signage systems are now much lower than they were in the past, it is important to

be mindful of the budget and staffing constraints of HOW clients. On many projects, you might need to help HOW clients clearly define their objectives in order to keep system and ownership costs under control.

Digital signage in HOW applications is on the rise, as indicated in *Sound & Communication's* 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Worship Center AV Survey

report published with the March issue. Seven percent of respondents expect to install digital signage systems in the next 18 months. You may want to check in with your house of worship clients to determine their readiness to embrace digital signage. Or, if they already have deployed signage, it might be a good time to discuss upgrading or expanding their systems. 

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far away and are very happy to watch their children and friends play baseball. This particular school has less than \$25,000 invested in the simple production “fly pack” that produced a very nice HD live stream event. However,

they will continue to invest more to create additional fly packs so other events can be live streamed. Live streaming sporting events like this one strengthens relations between students, parents and the school. This is the ultimate

goal among faith-based, private or public university leaders.

I encourage you to investigate this area of the HOW market because I believe that the use of live streaming technologies is rising. Thus,

it offers our industry another revenue stream that will continue to grow among faith-based educational facilities and, of course, HOWs. That is what I believe. Please tell me what you believe. 

## SEVEN YEARS IN THE MAKING: MODERNIZING LAKE HILLS CHURCH

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use the space on a Wednesday night and they could still use the space on Sunday morning. Accordingly, the audio, video and lighting packages would have to be upgraded and adapted to varying needs.

“We absolutely love the LED wall,” asserted Woodard. “It has been a game changer for us.” In order to explore this facet, he defined his role as creative consultant with the church.

“I’ve worked with the church for several years now, helping them do several projects that were connected to creativity with the church,” he explained. “One of the things that we’ve always done historically throughout the year is a message series, which is themed and goes for several weeks: sometimes two weeks, sometimes eight weeks.

“The messages are themed around a central concept. So part of my role with the church

has been helping actuate that concept in creative ways, environmentally, within the room. We would often change the stage, build sets and bring out prompts and various things that helped communicate those themes. Most of the time, the set builds were quite complex and labor intensive. Oftentimes, they would start one Sunday as soon as church was over and finish up by the time church started the following Sunday. It would take us a whole week to change the stage for the new message series.”

With that perspective in mind, Woodard related specifically how the new videowall was, in fact, a game changer. “One of the things that we love about the LED wall is that we can execute staging a lot quicker now,” he pointed out, “because it’s really just a matter of changing a graphic, maybe moving something around on the stage, physically. It allows

us to theme things out. Then, on a Wednesday night, we have a totally different scene in the room for students, or if we have a women’s event or a men’s event or something like that in the room, we can have a whole new theme, simply by manipulating the content on that wall. It’s breathtakingly attractive to look at, and it kind of commands your attention. It is a really useful tool for us, now that we are using that building as a multipurpose room.”

“The line arrays are unbelievable,” declared Woodard. “Perhaps I have a biased opinion on that, but it’s incredibly articulate and incredibly full sounding. Part of that may be a reference from where we came from with the previous PA install. It’s such a night-and-day difference.

“Embarking on this project, we went to several churches in our area that have rooms roughly the same size as ours,

and talked to their technical directors. We listened to their PAs and made notes of what other people had done with recent installs. In doing all of that, I think that choice we made gives us the best-sounding PA in Austin. It was definitely a great choice.”

“We love Skylark,” said Woodard. “We met them about seven years ago. Initially, we engaged a relationship with them for a project like this that got put on hold. But in between that, beginning seven years ago and now, they’ve done several other projects for us. We built a kids’ building with three different worship rooms, with Skylark doing all of the video and lighting. We had a downtown campus, and they did the PA, video and lighting. So, our relationship with Skylark has developed over the years, culminating into this project, and I’m sure that it will continue to evolve.” 