



## SOUTHERN UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY

Breaking through the monotony of reading, with audio

Founded in 1897, Southern Utah University in Cedar City is a fully accredited liberal arts and sciences university. The learning institution is committed to delivering personalized education in classes that allow maximum interaction with students and the development of strong mentoring relationships. The university maintains a program of cultural enrichment that offers students a robust and valuable campus experience and benefits the entire southern Utah region.

Matt Nickerson is the associate dean of Library Sciences at the university and an innovator in the field of mobile tours and audio guides. Nickerson created the nation's first mobile phone tour, in 2007, when he was a faculty researcher. He followed that up with the nation's first bilingual tour. Nickerson is Guide by Cell's first client. In recent years, he has used Guide by Cell services on multiple projects and campaigns, including outdoor audio tours of architecture and landmarks at the University of Massachusetts and at the Boston Public Library.



### THE CHALLENGE

The client was planning a special exhibit about the history of Shakespearean performances at the mining communities of the Wild West. The circular exhibit featured 38 stations with banners with historical information, documents, and several artifacts in the center of a room.

Visitors to the exhibit would walk around, reading banners in order. They would learn, chronologically, the story of famous New York actors and actresses who travelled by ship, carriage, and sometimes even by mule to reach Gold Rush territories and perform Shakespeare in ramshackle buildings and sometimes in tents.

"It was very text-dense," Nickerson said. "I thought some people might not want to read."

### THE SOLUTION

The client again partnered with Guide by Cell, incorporating Audio Guides and mobile websites into the tour.

Two signs posted at the exhibit advertised the audio tour and requested visitors to call a local number, entering codes for the individual 38 stations to learn more information than could be printed on the banners.

"The tour might start with one fact off a banner and then go somewhere else with the audio guide," Nickerson said. So if you wanted the full experience, you had to look, read and listen."

When Nickerson built the first mobile phone audio tour, he and an assistant spent six months coding the software



and building the surface from scratch. That process has not changed much over the years. Nickerson is still seen as an expert in the field of mobile and audio tours with the skills to program a solution himself, yet he again still chooses to partner with Guide by Cell.

"It's so much easier," he said. "I'm not going to go and code this thing. Plus, Guide by Cell gets me the local phone number that visitors will dial. I still have to create the content, but turning content into an exhibit takes only one hour."



Matt sought Guide by Cell for a special exhibit on campus

## THE RESULT

All exhibit visitors who called the local number at least once ended up listening to a minimum of 82 percent of all recorded content. A majority of visitors listened to 87 or more percent of all recorded audience. Additionally, the client was able to determine that exhibit visitors came from nine states, which would have been impossible to determine because many did not sign the guestbook.

"I did exactly what I wanted to do and I knew Guide by Cell could [help me] do it," Nickerson said.

Going forward, Nickerson wants to partner with Guide by Cell to build an exhibit capable of travelling the country with minor revisions. "Any library, any museum in the country can go and hang those banners," he said of the Shakespeare exhibit. "One call to Guide by Cell, you give me a new local phone number, and I'm done. It can travel easily."

The client also wants to use more Guide by Cell services on future projects, and incorporate more rich media besides audio, such as video and images. "I hope I get to do another project, because it's so fun," he said.

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-- **Matt Nickerson**

Associate dean of Library Sciences,  
Southern Utah University

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