



DIGITAL ADOPTION INSIGHTS REPORT

How 7 Museums Achieved Up to 99% Adoption of Digital Membership Cards

In recent years, an increasing number of cultural organizations are interested in upgrading, enhancing and streamlining their membership programs by launching a Digital Membership initiative.

Switching to [Digital Memberships Cards](#) can breathe new life into your membership program, simplify processes, save time and money, and amplify member engagement.

However, some organizations might hesitate to go digital due to concerns about member buy-in. For museums considering switching to digital, common questions revolve around member adoption. You may be wondering:

- How do we transition to digital effectively?
- How do we encourage members to download and use their digital cards?
- What's the best way to generate enthusiasm about digital cards from members?
- How do we go digital-first or make digital the default?



For organizations hoping to achieve optimal efficiency and cost-savings in their membership programs, transitioning the majority of their membership base to digital cards may be top priority.

Rest assured that with a few simple strategies, cultural organizations of every kind have successfully switched up to 90% of their membership base to digital cards. By thoughtfully planning your approach to digital card rollout and promotion, the vast majority of museums are capable of achieving these numbers.

Here, we'll spotlight how seven cultural organizations achieved exceptional Digital Membership Card adoption rates!



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Spotlight: Longue Vue House & Gardens

Longue Vue House & Gardens launched Digital Membership Cards with Cuseum in January 2019.



Location: New Orleans, LA



Annual Attendance: 42,000

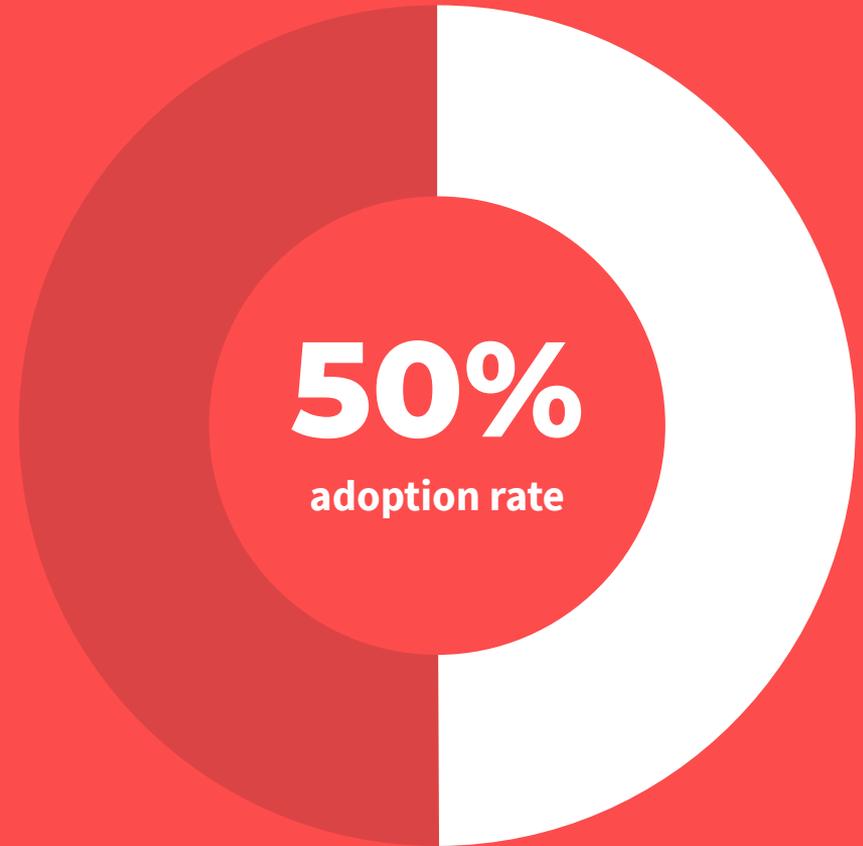


Member Households: 1,000



In two years, Longue Vue has achieved over 50% digital card adoption by their membership base. How did they attain this?

Susan Hudlow, Director of Engagement at Longue Vue, explained how their launch and promotional strategy set them up for success.



Fully Digital Rollout Strategy

To achieve the best results with Digital Membership Cards, Longue Vue distributed digital cards to their entire membership at the time of initial launch. After this launch, they went “digital by default,” so that all new and renewing members automatically receive a digital card unless otherwise requested.

Highlighting Member Benefits from the Get-Go

To facilitate a strong, positive reception to digital cards from members, Susan took a benefits-driven approach at Longue Vue, where she leveraged member communications to explain the perks of digital cards for members: ***“Our initial rollout was presented as a value-added membership benefit and part of our overall eco-friendly initiative.”***

Continuous Email Promotion Post-Launch

To ensure all members got the memo on the digital transition, Longue Vue planned member communications accordingly. Rather than sending just one announcement email, they prepared several months of newsletter reminders, and incorporated messaging about the digital cards into regular member communications. ***“To announce our new cards, we did two months of promotion in the member section of our monthly newsletter focusing on the benefits of a digital card and including a link to the FAQ section we placed on the website. About a week before launch we did a blast email to our members explaining the program in more detail and again including the FAQ link. Now that the program is established, information on the digital card is included in both the acknowledgement email at point of sale and the thank you letter sent from the membership office.”***

Spotlight: Tellus Science Museum

Tellus Science Museum
launched Digital
Membership Cards with
Cuseum in April 2019.



Location: Cartersville, GA



Annual Attendance: 200,000

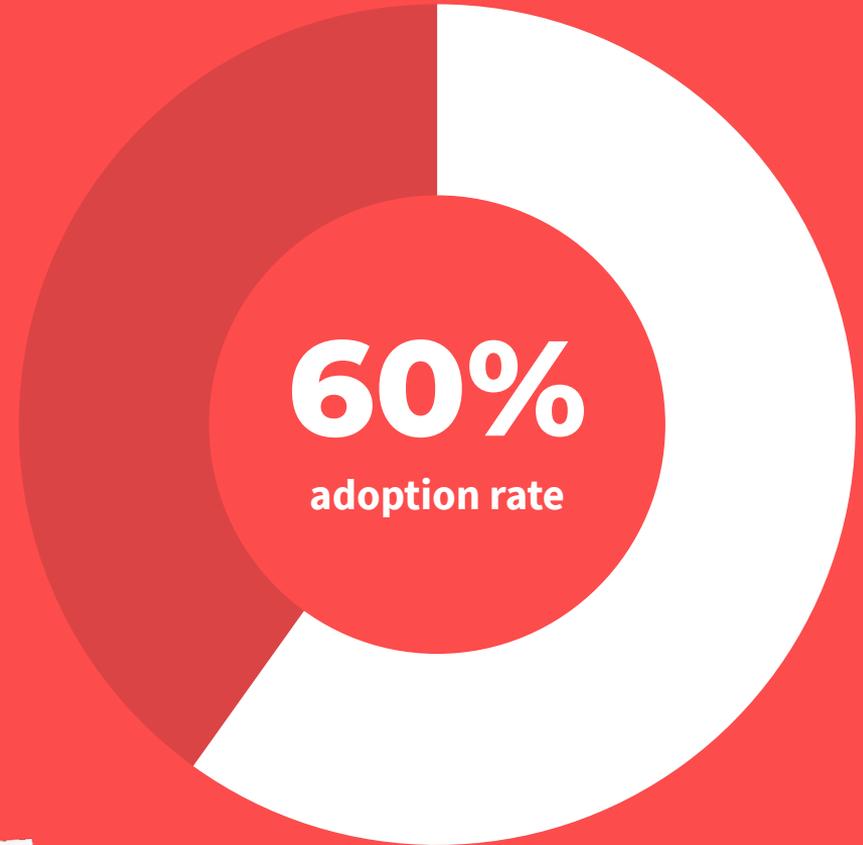


Members: 8,000



In just a year, Tellus achieved over 60% digital card adoption by their membership base. What's their secret?

Amanda Tadajewski, Membership Manager at Tellus, deployed a very simple strategy to enable a smooth transition to digital: renewals. Let's dive into their rollout process!



100% Digital Launch Strategy

Fulfilling memberships was an especially laborious process at Tellus, so Amanda was excited to go digital as quickly as possible: **“Member card fulfillment had always been quite a chore and it would take two to four weeks for members to get their cards in the mail.”** Tellus rolled out Digital Memberships Cards to their constituents all at once, immediately switching to digital cards as the standard membership benefit and offering plastic cards by request only. To prepare members for the launch, they explained the upcoming transition in quarterly member newsletters.

Leveraging Renewals for an Easy Transition

Although Tellus launched digital cards to all members in one go, Amanda quickly realized that renewal notices and acknowledgment letters were the most effective way to communicate this new digital initiative to their members and encourage them to download their cards: **“People are informed about digital cards as they purchase or renew and it goes very smoothly!”**

Aside from renewal and acknowledgement emails, Tellus hasn't needed to push any other special promotions or communications to encourage member adoption, since these have proven an effective and targeted way to inform members about digital memberships. Amanda also offered a tip to other organizations launching digital cards: **“If I were to launch all over again, I'd opt for rolling digital cards out as members join or renew. That way members would be more likely to read about the card (in the renewal notice) or be told in person at the membership desk to expect the digital card.”**

Spotlight: CuriOdyssey Science Playground & Zoo

CuriOdyssey Science Playground & Zoo launched Digital Membership Cards with Cuseum in October 2019.



Location: San Mateo, CA



Annual Attendance: 190,00

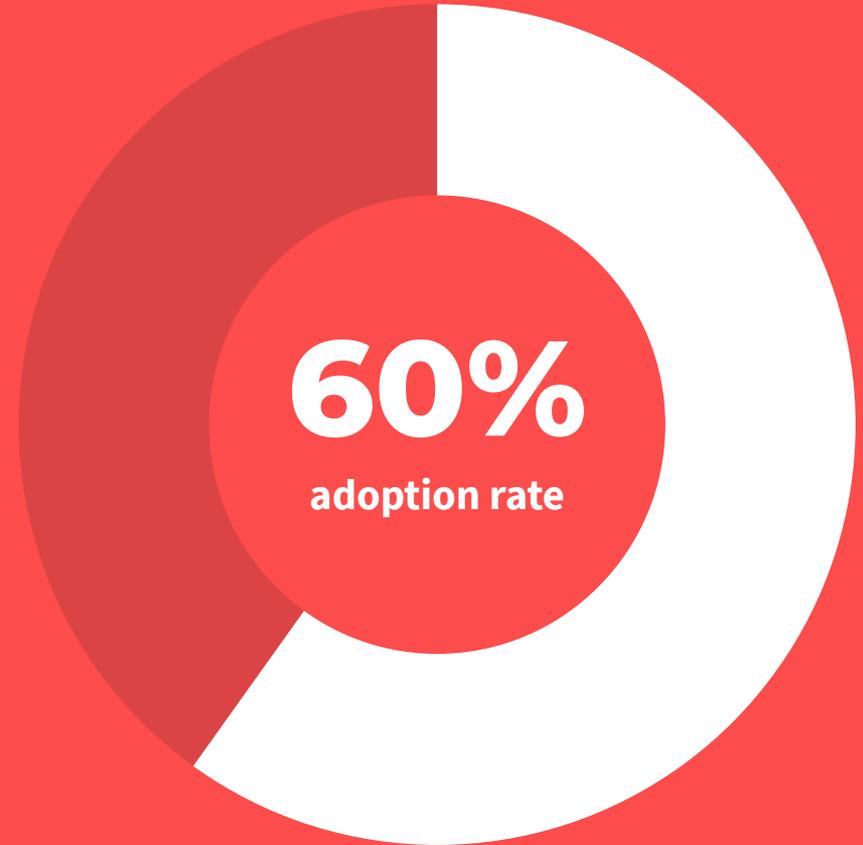


Member Households: 5,500



In one year, CuriOdyssey has achieved nearly 60% adoption of their digital cards, rolling out Digital Membership Cards to their entire membership base as part of an exhaustive effort to turn their whole membership process paper-free.

Michelle Sweaney, Associate Director of Membership at CuriOdyssey, shared more about their highly effective approach to launch!



100% Digital in All Parts of Membership

At CuriOdyssey, the launch of Digital Membership Cards was the first step of a comprehensive switch to digital in all aspects of membership: *“We went with a 100% rollout to members. They were sent a couple emails telling them that digital was coming in the weeks before we sent cards to everyone. We also took the opportunity to make the rest of our membership packet digital. We used to give or send members an envelope with their tax letter, membership cards, parking permits and information on reciprocal benefits and parking guidelines. Once we were transitioning to the digital cards, we revamped the packet into an email with attachments that members can print out if needed.”*

Multi-Channel Marketing Efforts

In addition to informing members via email about the upcoming move to digital, Michelle at CuriOdyssey made sure to spread the word on all social media channels. For these communications, she put extra care into crafting compelling messaging: *“Our members had been requesting digital cards for a long time, so we used language like ‘based on member feedback’ and ‘because you asked for it!’ We also pumped up the ‘green’ aspect of them. This has worked well for us.”*

Making the Most of Onsite Membership Sales

Lastly, Michelle and her team at CuriOdyssey *“talked digital cards up during onsite membership sales.”*

There’s significant data to suggest that positive interactions with staff can be the best part of visiting a cultural organization for members, so friendly frontline staff can be a valuable asset in explaining Digital Membership Cards clearly and enthusiastically during membership sales and renewals.

Spotlight: Morikami Museum & Japanese Gardens

Morikami Museum & Japanese Gardens launched Digital Membership Cards with Cuseum in October 2018.



Location: Palm Beach, FL



Annual Attendance: 200,00

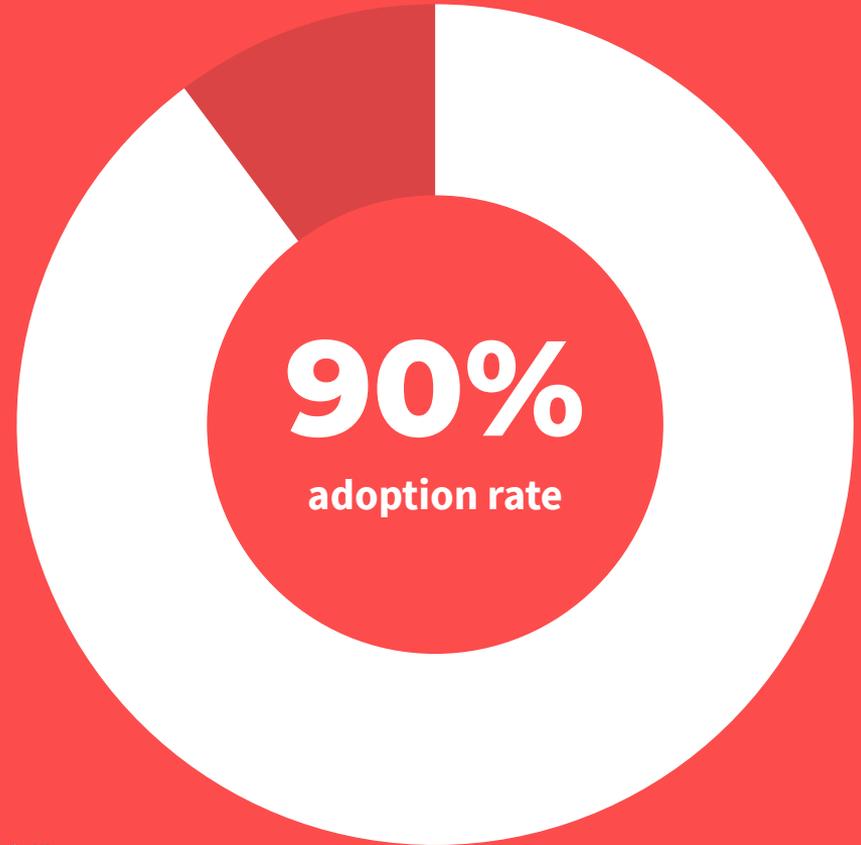


Members: 8,000



In the past two years, Morikami has achieved over 90% adoption of Digital Membership Cards! What accounts for their incredible success? Morikami executed a phased card rollout accompanied by thorough member communications, allowing them to reach record digital adoption and tout a digital-first membership experience.

Sharyn Samuels, Development & Membership Manager at Morikami, shared how they did it!



Phased Rollout by Membership Level

With a membership base of 8,000, Sharyn at Morikami wanted to ensure they could pace the rollout of new Digital Membership Cards effectively. For that reason, they decided to send digital cards in batches to several membership levels at a time.

Comprehensive Communications

The greatest strength of Morikami's rollout approach was their comprehensive communications plan. They announced their digital rollout a number of ways, starting with emails and social media: ***“We sent an e-blast to our membership announcing our intent to move to digital cards. Our initial approach was wanting to go as green as possible. We also had our marketing team post on all our social media sites. They had a great, creative way of making those posts.”***

Morikami also made ample use of onsite signage to inform members about digital cards: ***“In our museum lobby, we have a framed flyer on the membership desk announcing our digital card initiative, plus instructions on how to download to your phone. We also have a lobby screen with revolving museum information – Digital Card info is on that as well. We include a small instruction card in all new membership packets telling them how to download into their phone wallets.”***

Remarketing During COVID-19

Lastly, Morikami found great success hyping up the benefits of digital cards during COVID-19. This proved to be a turning point for members who had previously opted for a physical card: ***“With the pandemic, even more members wanted to move to a touchless entry at the membership desk. We love being able to offer digital cards to our members. It was the right direction to go in, now more than ever!”***

Spotlight: Adventure Science Center

The Adventure Science Center released Digital Membership Cards with Cuseum in July 2018.



Location: Nashville, TN



Annual Attendance: 380,000



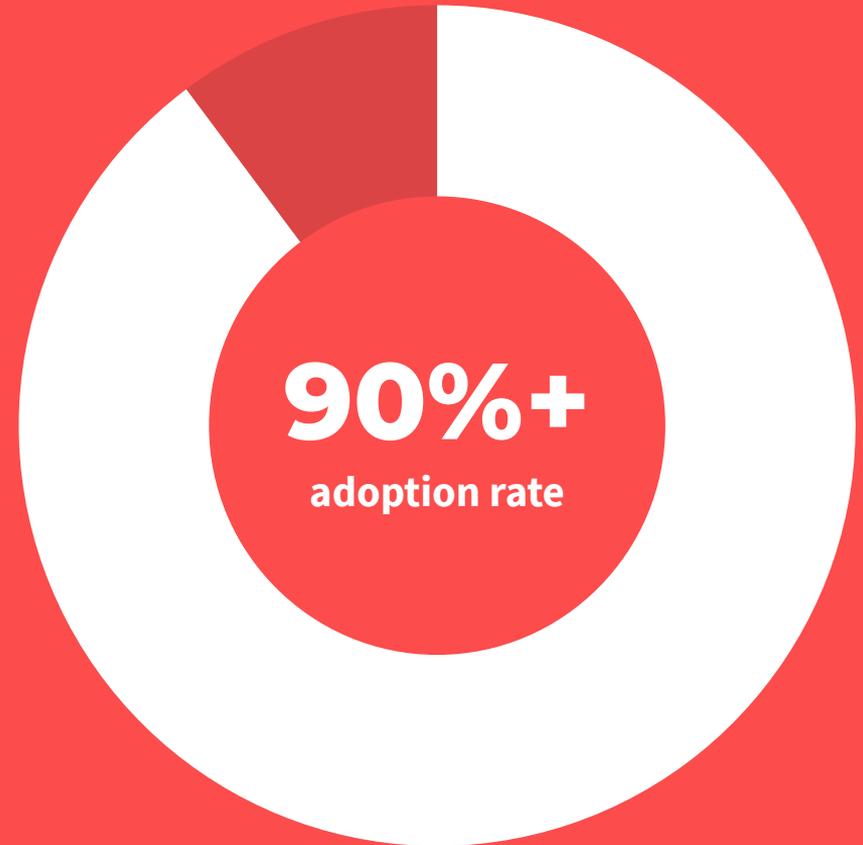
Member Households: 10,000



ADVENTURE SCIENCE
CENTER

In the past two years, the Adventure Science Center has reached nearly full Digital Membership Card adoption!

Tim Sears, Associate Director of Revenue Operations at Adventure Science Center, described the enterprising and rigorous approach they took to making a complete digital transition.



Committing to a Fully Digital Future

When the Adventure Science Center launched digital cards, they were committed to making a full switch to digital. This dedication to going “digital-first” has guided their robust approach to Digital Membership Card rollout. The center distributed digital cards to all members at the time of launch and immediately received a high number of downloads. Upon renewal, all members who had not yet downloaded their cards were switched to digital by default. Now members can only receive a physical card by request:

“When we first launched we sent a couple emails to our existing members alerting them about digital cards and to look out for the email with the link to download with the date it was coming. With existing members, we saw a fair amount of downloads, but they mostly downloaded upon their renewal. Because of this, we have 99% gone digital. Our application forms do not provide a choice and all members are communicated with online and in-person that their cards are digital. We will only print if someone asks, but they are not promoted that is an option unless they ask.”

Leveraging Membership Collateral

Tim at Adventure Science Center has found that membership collateral, including welcome emails and renewals, is the most effective way to share information about Digital Membership Cards with members: **“We promote digital cards on the collateral that comes with a new membership, including a physical welcome card (in-person sign-up) and confirmation email (online sign-up). We also send a welcome email to all members, which also includes a reminder about the digital card.”**

Spotlight: Fernbank Museum of Natural History

Fernbank Museum of Natural History launched Digital Membership Cards in January 2019.



Location: Atlanta, GA



Annual Attendance: 500,000+

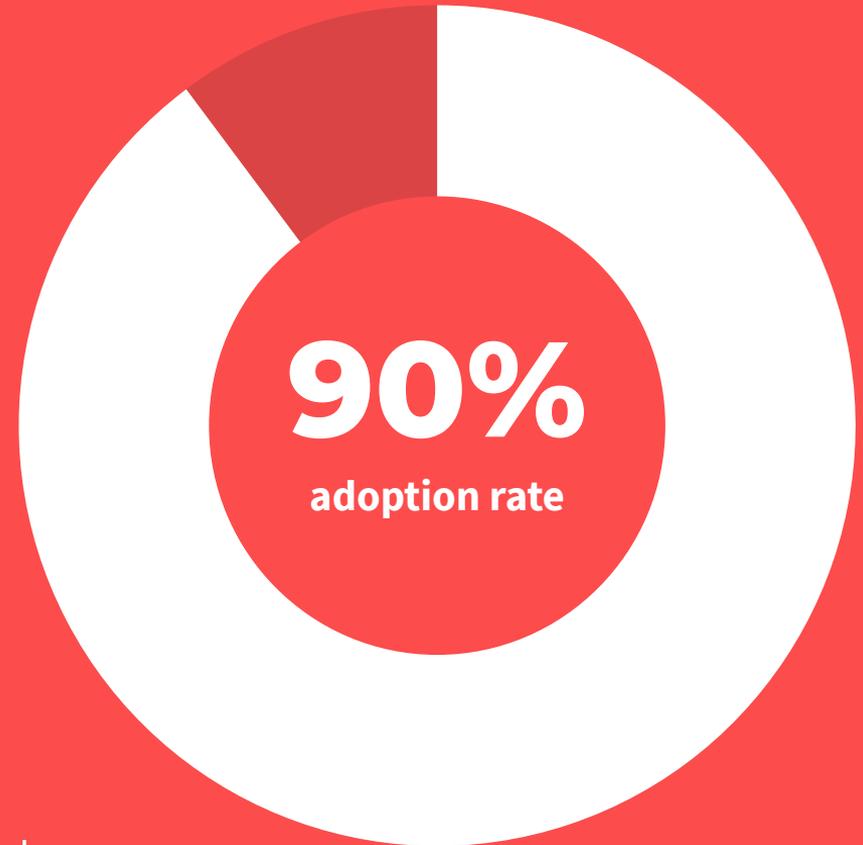


Member Households: 8,000



In the past two years, Fernbank has achieved nearly 90% Digital Membership Card adoption by taking a mission-based approach to launch and tying the switch to digital to their larger sustainability goals.

Allison Trice, Vice President of Membership & Guest Services at Fernbank, explained more about their rollout strategy.



Making it About Mission

The Fernbank Museum's mission is to “ignite a passion for science, nature and human culture through exploration and discovery.” Because of their dedication to science and nature education, Fernbank is **“committed to green practices and has been since its founding in 1939 to preserve Fernbank Forest as a school in the woods for nature studies.”**

This commitment to sustainability resonates deeply with Fernbank's members, so when the museum launched new Digital Membership Cards, Allison made sure to communicate the importance of going green with membership: **“We started off by sending out a member-wide email stating Fernbank's goal to ‘Go Green’ in which we also announced the ability for members to opt out of paper membership renewals as well.”** This type of messaging has hit home for members. Fernbank's digital cards continue to be an opt-in choice, and they've still managed to go nearly 90% digital!

Rollout to New & Renewing Members

In addition to focusing on the sustainability aspects of Digital Membership Cards, Fernbank also opted to roll out digital cards to new and renewing members, which is one of the most effective ways to transition to digital. Now, all online membership sales automatically receive a digital card. For onsite and phone membership sales, members have a choice between physical and digital, but the vast majority choose digital!

Spotlight: San Antonio Zoo

The San Antonio Zoo launched Digital Membership Cards with Cuseum in July 2019.



Location: San Antonio, TX



Annual Attendance: 1,000,000

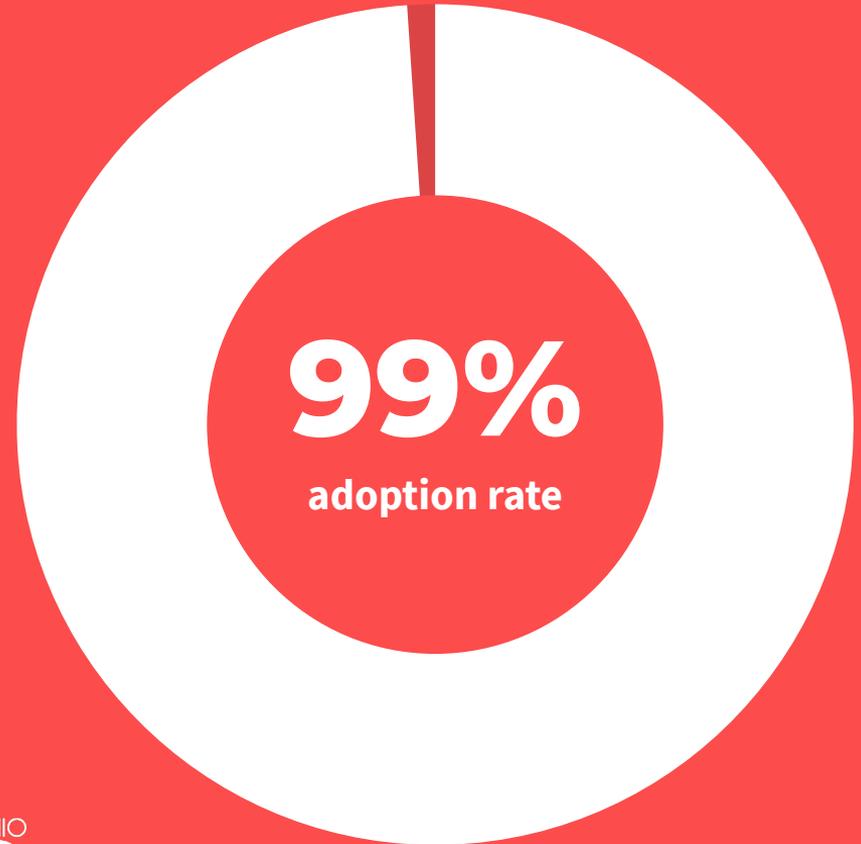


Members: 80,000



Between July 2019 and November 2019, the San Antonio Zoo moved their entire membership base to digital cards.

Ash Harris, Vice President of Guest Experience, described the comprehensive approach the zoo took to going 100% digital in record time.



Setting a Deadline to Go 100% Digital

When the San Antonio Zoo launched their digital cards in July 2019, they set December 31, 2019 as a deadline to make the switch to 100% digital. They ended up completing this transition even sooner than expected by incentivizing digital cards: ***“In actuality we ended up completely going 100% digital starting November 1, 2019 and allowed guests to purchase actual cards for \$5.00 each. Currently we are 100% digital and to this day we have not sold any actual cards. We do make an exception. If we have any guest that is technology challenged we give them an actual card for no charge. In 2020 we have only given out 28 cards, out of 80,000 members.”***

Creating a Digital Membership “Genius Bar”

To make it as easy as possible for their members, San Antonio Zoo offered accessible help with digital cards to all members: ***“What made the transition to 100% digital faster and successful was that we offered something similar to an Apple Store ‘Genius Bar,’ where guests could come to the zoo any day we are open and we can show them how to install the digital membership cards and where it can be found on the phone.”***

Going Green with Digital

Across San Antonio Zoo’s website and Facebook (their most active social media account), Ash made sure to convey that the switch to digital cards was also a mission-aligned green initiative. They shared this message from their President & CEO, Jim Morrow: ***“Reducing our reliance on paper and plastic very much aligns with our mission and the conservation focus of San Antonio Zoo. This new [membership] process is not only more earth friendly, it is more convenient for our Annual Pass holders.”***

What are the rollout best practices to reach high digital adoption?

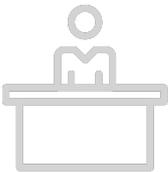
Every museum's story is different, but organizations that achieve exceptional digital adoption rates have deployed many common strategies...



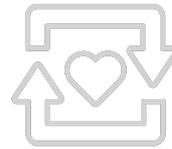
What are the rollout best practices to reach high digital adoption?



Leverage regular member communications, like renewal notices, welcome letters, and acknowledgement emails. Social media and newsletter announcements are important, but nothing is more valuable than communicating your switch to digital in direct communications with members. When someone signs up or renews, these notices are one of the most targeted and personalized ways to inform members how membership cards will be served going forward!



Use onsite membership sales and signage to your advantage. The latest [membership data](#) demonstrates that friendly and informative interactions with staff are one of the best parts of a member's onsite experience. Use this to your advantage! Enabling frontline staff at the membership and admissions desk to notify members about the benefits of digital cards is a powerful way to generate excitement and goodwill towards Digital Membership Cards during routine membership sales.



Craft benefits-driven messaging. Across all of your communications, illuminate to your members what value digital cards will bring to them. This may be new convenience, easy access to benefits, contactless entry, environmental sustainability, and more!



Make digital the default. Organizations with outstanding adoption rates consistently make Digital Membership Cards the default option. This means that unless members specifically request a physical card, they will receive a digital one. To go “digital-first,” consider making digital the default at the time of renewal or sale, and/or establish a date by which you'll stop issuing physical cards.



Allow time to reach digital maturity. Time and time again, organizations have found that renewals are the most effective way to communicate the switch to digital with members. That means achieving high digital adoption may take a full year! Exercise patience, and continue to push out relevant communications to members about the benefits of digital - it will be worth it!

If you're considering making the switch to Digital Membership Cards, but concerned about member buy-in, fear not!

Countless organizations with membership constituencies of all kinds have achieved outstanding digital adoption rates, and you can too!

When it comes to rolling out new digital initiatives, compelling messaging, consistent communications, and a strong commitment to go digital can help you achieve enthusiastic member adoption too.

We're always here to help and share resources.

Free to reach out to Cuseum at hello@cuseum.com if you have any questions.

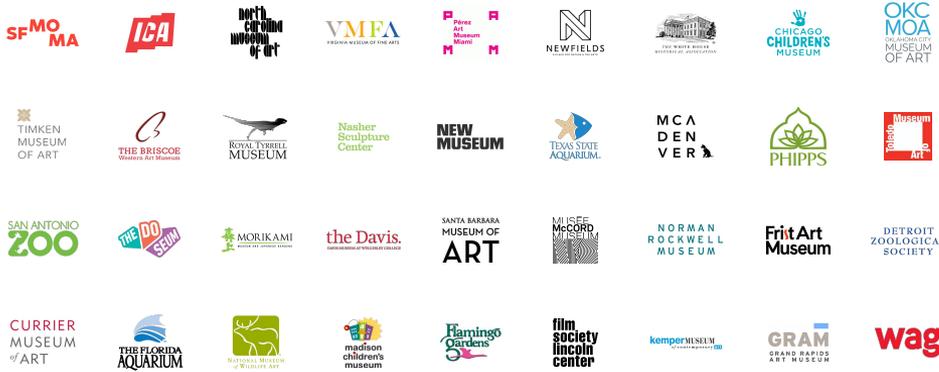


ABOUT CUSEUM

Cuseum helps organizations drive visitor, member and patron engagement using digital tools. Cuseum's software platform makes it easy for museums, attractions and nonprofits to publish mobile apps, generate digital membership cards and leverage data insights.

TRUSTED BY LEADING ORGANIZATIONS

Cuseum's solution are leveraged by world-class organizations around the globe.



INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE? We'd love to hear from you!



Dan Sullivan
dan@cuseum.com



ENGAGEMENT PLATFORM

Cuseum provides a unified solution.



MOBILE ENGAGEMENT

Quickly, easily, and affordably power **mobile guide apps** to better engage your visitors.



DIGITAL MEMBERSHIP CARDS

Deliver **digital membership cards** and campaigns to your loyal members and patrons.



GUEST PASS REFERRAL

Leverage existing members to attract new visitors and members using a **referral portal + digital guest pass**.



DIGITAL TICKETS

Reduce costs and offer a seamless, safe, and digital way for your visitors to receive their tickets right on their mobile phones.