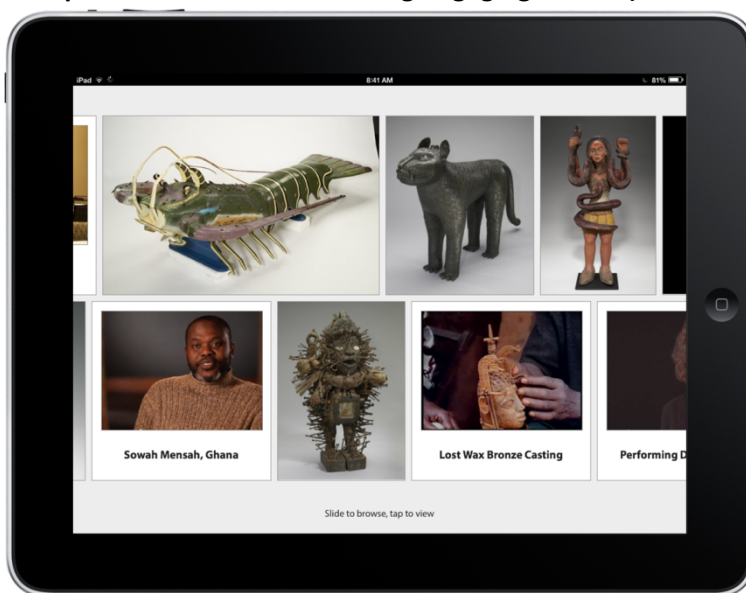




## Minneapolis Institute of Arts

### Griot: An open source toolset for telling engaging stories (November 2014)



**The Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA)** has created an open source toolset called *Griot* for crafting and sharing engaging stories. The software tools were developed in-house as part of the museum-wide digital experience project (TDX), a cross-functional effort to delight our visitors by delivering interesting and accessible stories based on the museum’s vast collection using digital platforms. The MIA will continue to refine and implement *Griot* tools and share them with the wider community, including with collaborating museum partners, who are using and expanding the functionality going forward. To view a sample of the interpretive software as it used at the MIA: <http://griot.artsmia.org>

**The first phase** of the *Griot* open source software project was launched in November 2013, to coincide with the re-opening of the MIA’s African Art Galleries. The internal development team delivered the toolset on tablet devices installed in the galleries for visitors to explore and enjoy. Internally, the museum branded the digital delivery as “ArtStories” to help visitors locate and recognize each installation. The initial roll-out has been met with positive response from audiences and the press. The tablets are in use every day, engaging people in social interactions and shared experiences, as well as allowing individuals to dive deeply into the content on their own.

**The second phase** of *Griot/ArtStories* will launch museum-wide in early 2015 — this new phase will further utilize the software’s responsive design capabilities, delivering content to users’ smartphones, digital tablets, or personal computers (including the newest 4k high-resolution monitors). Overall, *Griot* is flexible, easy to use, and looks great on any size of digital display.

**The MIA’s development team** dubbed the software toolset *Griot* because of the platform’s excellent interpretive storytelling capabilities: *Griot* is a West African term for a wise story-teller. The application provides user-friendly methods for crafting stories and incorporating multimedia content (e.g., images, audio, and video). The stories are presented online or in-gallery via an internet browser. The *Griot* package includes three specific tools for (1) authoring content, (2) presenting stories, and (3) tiling & annotating large images to enhance zooming, panning, and highlighting of particular details. The tools may be used to produce mobile device-ready experiences and/or to develop

websites. Because the software is open source and uploaded to GitHub, it is available for free and may be used by many different types of organizations. In addition, open source enables any skilled developer to modify the software and to contribute those modifications to the project, enhancing *Griot* for all who use it.



**Future plans** for *Griot* include broader implementation in 2015 across the full array of galleries at the MIA. The museum is adding many more stories to delight the public, utilizing the existing optimization of the software for small-screen devices (e.g., smart phones). In addition to the MIA-based work, an important goal is to establish a collaborative network of partners who will make use of and extend the toolset for the benefit of all, including new collaborating art museum partners that have been established in 2014. Along with art museums, in the near future *Griot* tools could easily be implemented at a science museum as “ScienceInsights” or at a history center as “HistoryHighlights”. The potential uses of the software toolset (and institutional branded nicknames) are bound only by the vision of those who adopt and extend it.

#### **Technical features of *Griot***

- AngularJS MVW Framework
- WordPress CMS (other web CMS systems can be adapted for *Griot*, such as Drupal, Joomla, etc.)
- JSON

#### **Toolset components and detailed documentation**

- HTML5 application that visitors view in the MIA galleries <http://github.com/artsmia/griot>
- WordPress Plugin for annotating images and writing content <http://github.com/artsmia/GriotWP>
- Image tiling application <http://github.com/artsmia/tilesaw>

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