Atlanta’s Beloved Center for Puppetry Arts Museum Undergoes Upgrade to SALTO Systems Electronic Locks

Located in Midtown Atlanta, the Center for Puppetry Arts is the United States’ largest non-profit organization dedicated to the art form of puppetry. This popular destination — which welcomes more than 150,000 visitors from all over the world each year — is home to some of puppetry’s most recognizable figures including Kermit the Frog, Miss Piggy, and many more. In fact, beloved puppeteer Jim Henson, accompanied by Kermit, cut the ceremonial ribbon when the Center opened to the public in 1978. The award-winning Center, which focuses on Performance, Education, and the Worlds of Puppetry Museum, has become a leading voice in the field of puppetry and serves as host for numerous conferences and festivals.

CHALLENGE

The Center for Puppetry Arts is housed in the former Spring Street Elementary School, part of which was built in 1918. A capital campaign has provided for a multi-phase improvement plan that included the construction of two new galleries (Phase I) and renovations of the existing building (Phase II).

The newly constructed galleries include the Jim Henson Gallery and the Global Gallery. The Jim Henson Gallery features approximately 75 artifacts highlighting Henson’s career including puppets from The Muppet Show, Sesame Street, Fraggle Rock, and Labyrinth among others. The 75 items on display are rotated from over 500 puppets and objects donated by the Henson family. The Global Gallery is a visual representation of how puppetry has crossed cultural lines and includes more than 175 puppets and artifacts representing five continents.

The Center commissioned Atlanta’s Operational Security Systems (OSS) to provide security including access control for both phases of the construction.
software to provide access control for the Center for Puppetry Arts because it met all challenges including affordability, innovation, and ease of use.

Coleman described the revolutionary SALTO Virtual Network (SVN) data-on-card technology as an innovative and affordable way to achieve the latest in access control. SVN provides the flexibility for an access control system to grow, as needed, from a small number of doors and users to numerous doors and users. It allows stand-alone locks to read, receive, and write information via an encrypted and secure data-on-card system that utilizes the capabilities of RFID read/write technology. In SVN, all access data is stored on and distributed by its operating credential. When presenting a credential to an offline stand-alone door, not only does this control access rights to that door but, thanks to two-way communication, the door also writes data — like blacklist information or battery status — back to the smartcard. The smartcard then transmits this information back to the server via online wall readers that update and receive information from the cards anytime and anywhere in the facility.

Center for Puppetry Arts Producer Liz Lee added that the access control system would have to accommodate the Center’s 50-plus doors and 75 full- and part-time employees who are on different schedules and require varying levels of access. As a museum and a tourist attraction, the Center has public areas where visitors are free to roam, but also has more sensitive areas like archive storage and offices that require extra security.

SOLUTION

Coleman recommended SALTO Systems electronic lock products and supporting ProAccess SPACE software to provide access control for the Center for Puppetry Arts because it met all challenges including affordability, innovation, and ease of use.

The challenge, said OSS President Jim Coleman, included many key components:

- Provide an access control solution that would be affordable for the non-profit;
- Replace the use of the standard keys;
- Be technologically advanced and future-proof;
- Work seamlessly between the new construction and the existing, older facility.

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Because the Center for Puppetry Arts had such a variety of needs, we used a little bit of everything from SALTO’s vast electronic lock product line to work in concert with the SVN technology," said Coleman.

Among the products installed at the Center are the SALTO XS4 Locker and XS4 GEO Electronic Padlock. SALTO’s XS4 escutcheon’s easy-to-install design makes it simple for security professionals to upgrade and replace mechanical key operated door locks with the latest electronic access control solution.

The XS4 GEO Electronic Padlock is a versatile locking solution that enables users to benefit from the advantages of electronic access control where previously it was only possible to use a mechanical locking solution. The XS4 Locker brings all the advantages of an electronic access control solution for lockers and cabinets such as those used in the offices and administrative areas. The electronic and mechanical components are located on the inside to enhance the security against vandalism or manipulation.

Lee said employees mainly use key fobs to gain entry into secured areas; however, some have also chosen to use an RFID wristband for access since it allows them more freedom to use their hands when carrying items, etc.

To manage the system, Lee and the Center’s Facilities Director use ProAccess SPACE, SALTO’s web-based access control software that offers a modern, user-centered interface for varying skills, capabilities, and security levels.

“ProAccess SPACE is user friendly and it’s great to be able to access the program easily from different computers,” said Lee.

Phase I of the project, which includes both new galleries, is complete and Coleman said he looks forward to expanding the solution for Phase II, the upgrade of the existing building.

“SALTO Systems originated in Europe, which gave them a great deal of experience in working with older and historic buildings. That’s one of the reasons why they are an excellent resource for projects that involve upgrading facilities to the latest in electronic locks and access control,” said Coleman. “We look forward to completing Phase II and enhancing the original facility with technologically-advanced electronic access control.”

Lee said she looks forward to expanding access control to Phase II. “Our experience so far with the SALTO installation has been great. We can’t wait for the rest of the project to be finished!”