The Illinois Distributed Museum (IDM) is an online resource that began to be developed in 2012. It now links together in one virtual location a range of tangible objects, locales, markers, exhibits, documents, and information that are physically dispersed on campus. The IDM ties archives, museums, exhibits, built landscapes, and digital resources together in an interpretive framework, delivered through both a website and mobile phone application. The framework organizes this diverse content into a series of narratives and exploratory pathways that enable users with different backgrounds and interests to learn about the processes, products, and impacts of innovation at the University of Illinois. It also allows telling the story of the relation of this work to other locations, events, people, and the nonacademic world. It supplements and enhances, but does not replace, the existing formal museums on campus.

The Illinois Distributed Museum is designed to be a self-directed learning tool. It is targeted to multi-generational groups and can be used from a distance but is enriched by physically visiting locales across campus. At a general level it is intended to enhance people’s understandings of innovation processes, knowledge flows, and academic environments. Specifically, this resource is intended to tell University of Illinois stories in ways that (1) Unite temporally or spatially separated ideas, events, and objects without physically reproducing and moving them; (2) Highlight the historic and ongoing impacts and synergies that University of Illinois research, teaching, and public service have produced at home and abroad; (3) Engage the public and inspire them to learn, participate, and explore.

Two panels further illustrate the IDM follow on the next two pages.
The Illinois Distributed Museum Project:
Engineering and Technology Innovations at Urbana-Champaign

A collaboration between the College of Engineering, Department of Anthropology and the Graduate School of Library and Information Science

**Our Vision**
- Build an online resource that helps tell the many stories of engineering achievements at the University of Illinois.
- Note not only the discoveries made here, but identify the people involved and how they came to make those discoveries.
- Explore the implications and impacts of those discoveries in terms of future breakthroughs and everyday lives.
- Showcase the place of the University of Illinois as a catalyst of innovation, bringing together different people and different ideas, and sparking new unexpected solutions.

**The Challenges**
- The pieces of the stories are distributed across numerous locations and times, and interconnected in complicated ways.
- The stories involve artifacts, buildings, and laboratories - some still here, others gone, moved, repurposed.
- These stories also involve abstract ideas, personal relationships, and serendipitous connections.
- How can we connect people, concepts, objects and places distributed across time and space in ways that enable visitors to have self-directed museum-like experiences?

**Our Solution**
- Construction of a prototype that combines several free web tools to create a virtual shell that links these many objects, places, concepts, people and stories together.
- The shell enable visitors to discover and delve into stories of innovation in their own ways and to contribute their own places to the stories.
- Extensive experimenting and rapid prototyping not only engage a widening audience, but has helped identify the limitations of free web tools and plan for a more complex, effective and user-friendly custom platform.

**The Future**
- Our next steps are to develop our own online platform that incorporates all of the tools and features of this project, and to expand topics.
- Our hope is that the Illinois Distributed Museum will one day present stories about innovation from all of the units on campus, helping people to understand how and why innovation happens here, and what is unique about it.
- As the museum grows, so will audience participation, with many more stories and insights being provided by former students and faculty.
A few of the Permanent Exhibits at the Illinois Distributed Museum

The Siebel Center for Computer Science contains excellent exhibits on the ILLIAC series of supercomputers and the PLATO computer learning system. Look for computer components and items from these pioneering projects in the first floor lobby.

The Loomis Laboratory of Physics holds several artifacts related to the Physics Department's long and prestigious history including the first betatron (an important particle accelerator developed by an Illinois professor). There are also small exhibits on two of the 13 Nobel Laureates who have been associated with the Physics department.

The Sousa Archives and Center for American Music, on the second floor of the Harding Band Building, contains a wealth of artifacts from the history of music at Illinois. A prize piece here is the Sal-Mar Construction, an early 1970s one-of-a-kind electronic musical instrument, constructed using parts from the ILLIAC II computer, and it still functions today! (Sousa closed on weekends)

The Spurlock Museum is a great place to learn about human history and culture. It also holds a number of important engineering artifacts including the very first practical application of transistor technology - John Bardeen's music box.