NMWA Case Study

About

The National Museum of Women in the Arts has been using Asset Bank—which they affectionately call "Betty" thanks to a generous donation—since 2016 to solve issues with sharing images and assets across the institution. Before that, much of this was done through email, leading to lost images, excessive duplicates, and inefficient processes.

10,000+

The number of assets NMWA has in its system

2 Years

How long the museum was closed for renovations

Multiple departments

Asset Bank is an integral part of several museum departments

Introduction

Asset Bank has been an integral part of NMWA's digitisation strategy for almost a decade—but it wasn't until the museum underwent a huge renovation that the team decided to get serious with their digital asset management.

Now, "Betty" is an essential part of their daily operations, primarily as a tool to store and manage access to a wide variety of digital assets.

While the system houses a diverse collection including seasonal magazine publications and digitised archival materials, it's most frequently used for managing images. The museum staff relies on Betty every single day to organise, access, and share their digital resources.

The Challenge

Juggling a huge renovation and a digital overhaul

The museum was nearing the end of its renovations when Dominique Manuel, the new Digital Asset Manager, joined the team. At the time, staff were stationed at a temporary office, but many worked from home and needed frequent access to important documents.

As operations resumed and the reopening approached, the team found themselves handling an increasing number of assets and requests.

As preparations for the museum's reopening after a two-year hiatus intensified, Dominique noticed a challenge: many Asset Bank users were either contractors or associated with the renovation's architecture firm. This created uncertainty about user access management—specifically, which accounts were still necessary and for how long they should be maintained.

At the same time, a wave of new hires joined the museum staff. This influx presented a dual challenge: rapidly onboarding new employees to the Asset Bank system while also reorganising existing assets to align with the museum's fresh vision.

The Solution

From chaos to clarity: How Asset Bank became the heart of museum operations

Asset Bank was an invaluable tool during the museum's renovation. Without it, assets could've been easily lost. While they weren't necessarily uploaded with much regard for metadata or organisation (the team was just keen to get everything online in whichever way possible), the fact that people could use it was crucial.

Using Asset Bank's user management capabilities, Dominique could easily remove users who were no longer at the institution to make room for new hires.

"We have a limited number of users," she says. **"So I'm glad that Asset Bank has made it easy for me to make sure everyone who needs access to Asset Bank can get it."**

It was after the museum's renovation that Betty really came into her own. Dominique is now on a mission to categorise, tag, and organise thousands of assets so every department can find exactly what they need, when they need it. After in-depth training with the Asset Bank team, Dominique can now manage the museum's wealth of assets quickly and efficiently.
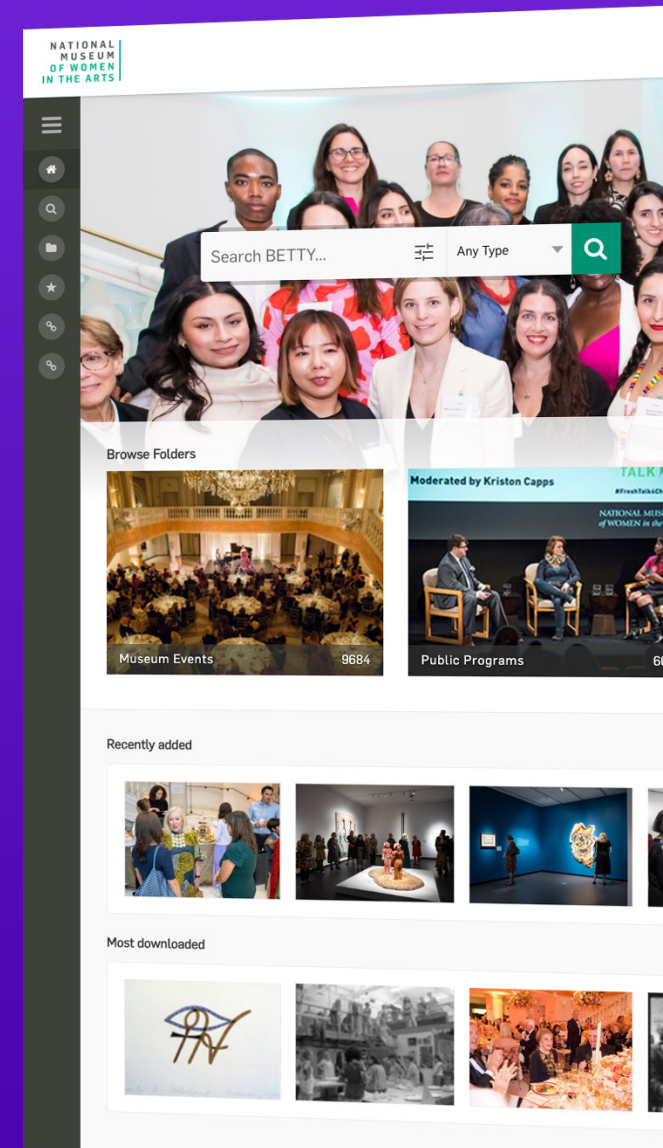
When it came to onboarding new team members, Dominique took a hands-off approach. **"I entered their email into the system and they received an email to set up their login credentials. From there, usage is very straightforward."** She also linked tutorials for using Asset Bank for the first time in the navigation menu for all users. **"This works well—I rarely get questions from users encountering issues,"** she says.

Dominique took this one step further and created a spreadsheet (affectionately titled the Betty Upload Request Template) that streamlines any upload requests people might have. They simply fill out the spreadsheet in their own time and then Dominique plugs everything into Asset Bank.

Asset Bank has a built in approval workflow that users can take advantage of which you can learn more about on our website.

The current focus is on improving the organisation and searchability of assets within the system. For Dominique, this includes restructuring folders to make them more intuitive and current, adding relevant keywords to assets to improve searchability, and anticipating user search needs and information requests.

"I think every department interacts with asset bank in some way, and they're using it for the various image needs and repository needs. Even the bare bones level of Asset Bank has been very helpful to the institution. People need it. People use it. They use it for all kinds of things."

Elizabeth Ajunwa, Director, Library and Research Center (LRC)
National Museum of Women in the Artst

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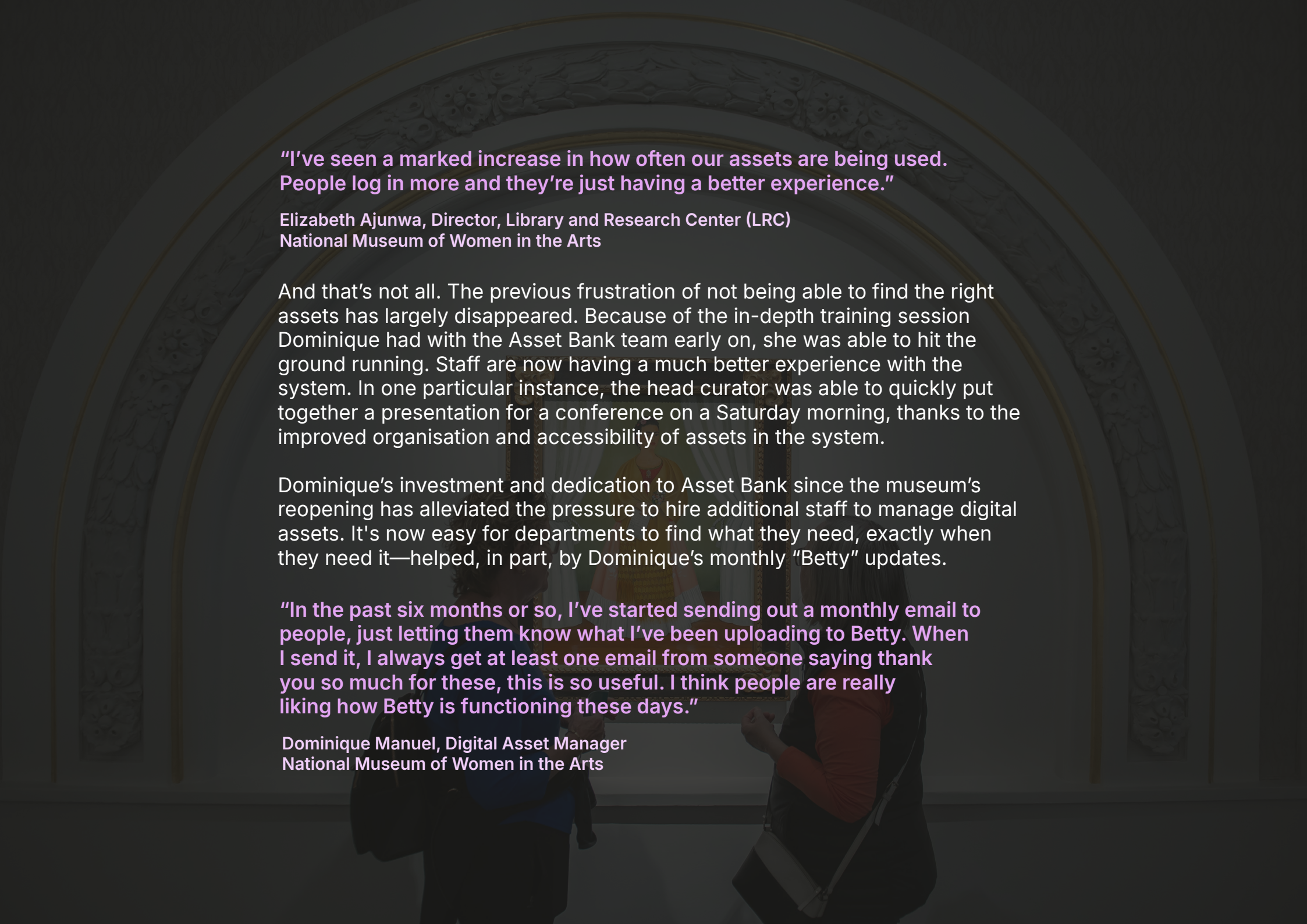Privacy Policy   About   Contact Us

The Results

NMWA's staff reap the benefits of a revamped Asset Bank

After the museum's renovation, Asset Bank became an integral part of NMWA's operations. While it was used during the renovation period, the focus was mainly on uploading assets with minimal metadata—it was basically a tool to digitise existing assets, but there was no real structure to it, just haste to get everything online. In the past two years, there has been a concerted effort to make the system more effective and efficient.

Today, Asset Bank has filtered through to almost every museum department. The publications team uses it to access photos, retrieve credit lines, and source images for magazines and other media mentions. They also use the lightboxes feature to share assets with vendors and publishers, while the comms and marketing teams use it to send images to the press.

Staff across different departments have reported that they can find and share documents much more easily now, saving them time and energy. But most notably, there has been a significant increase in the overall usage of Asset Bank. The museum has seen growth across the board in terms of logins, downloads, and general asset utilisation.

Between September 2022 and September 2023, only 102 assets were uploaded to Betty, receiving 31,650 views in total. Compared to the last year (September 2023 to September 2024), usage has more than doubled. 1,771 assets were uploaded over the past twelve months, receiving a whopping 73,791 views.

"I've seen a marked increase in how often our assets are being used. People log in more and they're just having a better experience."

Elizabeth Ajunwa, Director, Library and Research Center (LRC)
National Museum of Women in the Arts

And that's not all. The previous frustration of not being able to find the right assets has largely disappeared. Because of the in-depth training session Dominique had with the Asset Bank team early on, she was able to hit the ground running. Staff are now having a much better experience with the system. In one particular instance, the head curator was able to quickly put together a presentation for a conference on a Saturday morning, thanks to the improved organisation and accessibility of assets in the system.

Dominique's investment and dedication to Asset Bank since the museum's reopening has alleviated the pressure to hire additional staff to manage digital assets. It's now easy for departments to find what they need, exactly when they need it—helped, in part, by Dominique's monthly "Betty" updates.

"In the past six months or so, I've started sending out a monthly email to people, just letting them know what I've been uploading to Betty. When I send it, I always get at least one email from someone saying thank you so much for these, this is so useful. I think people are really liking how Betty is functioning these days."

Dominique Manuel, Digital Asset Manager
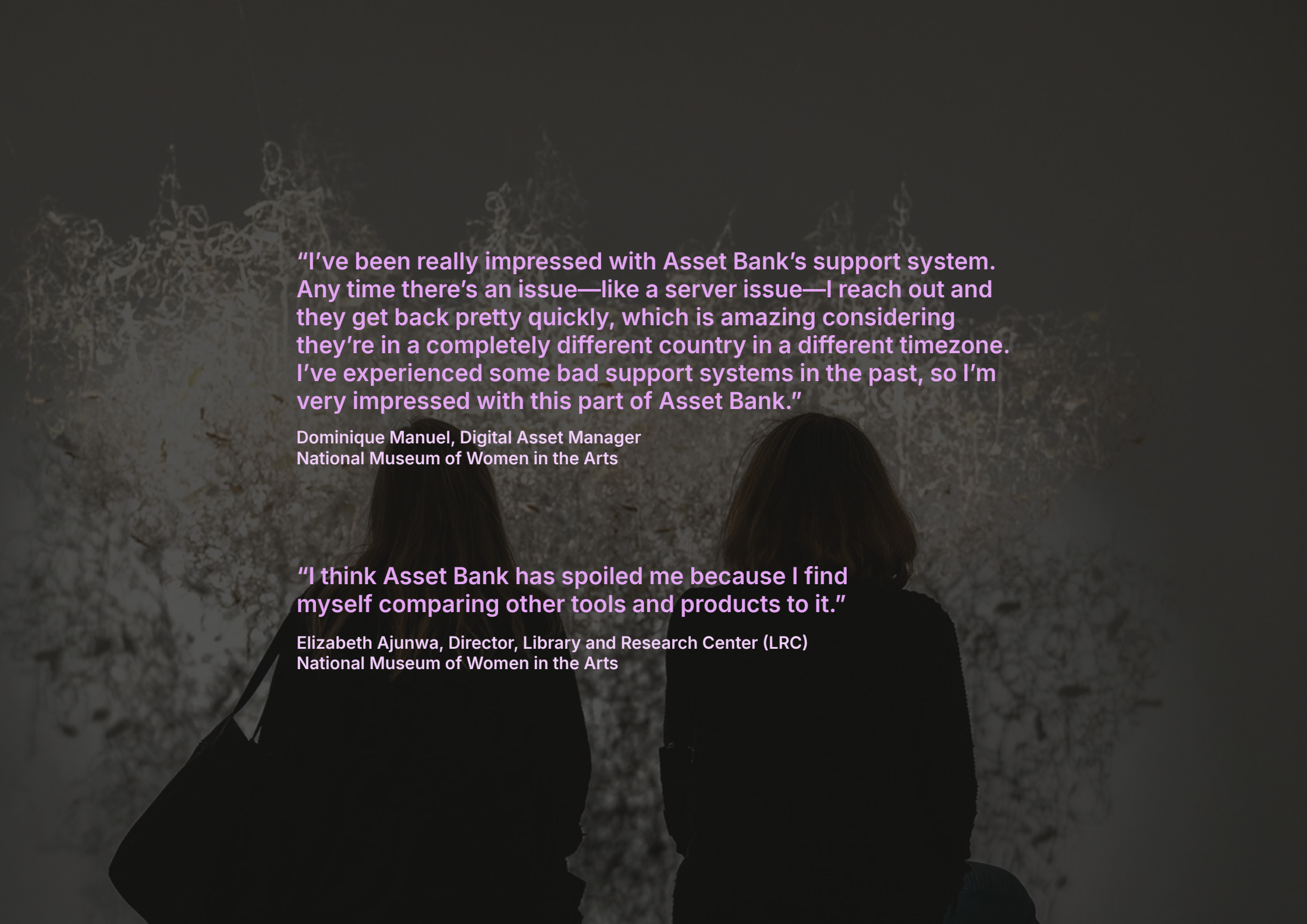National Museum of Women in the Arts

Looking Ahead

A fresh approach to archiving and born-digital content

The success of Asset Bank has inspired other digital projects at NMWA. One of these is a digital accessibility grant, which the digital engagement team is using to improve digital accessibility across the institution.

But this is just the start. NMWA has big plans for Asset Bank. Here are a handful that are on the horizon:

- **Archival integration**. There's a lot of archival material in Asset Bank that hasn't been fully utilised yet. Once NMWA hires an archivist, they want to create a seamless connection between their finding aids, storage schemas, and Asset Bank. The goal is to link the digitised versions of their archival collections in Asset Bank with the broader archival system.

- **Digital archiving strategy**. Now that they have this digital repository in place, NMWA wants to figure out what digital archiving should look like for their institution. They need to determine how archival work will function in this new digital environment.

- **Born-digital content**. There's a recognition that many items are now "born digital" - created in digital form rather than being digitised from physical objects. NMWA wants to develop strategies for managing and preserving this type of content within Asset Bank.
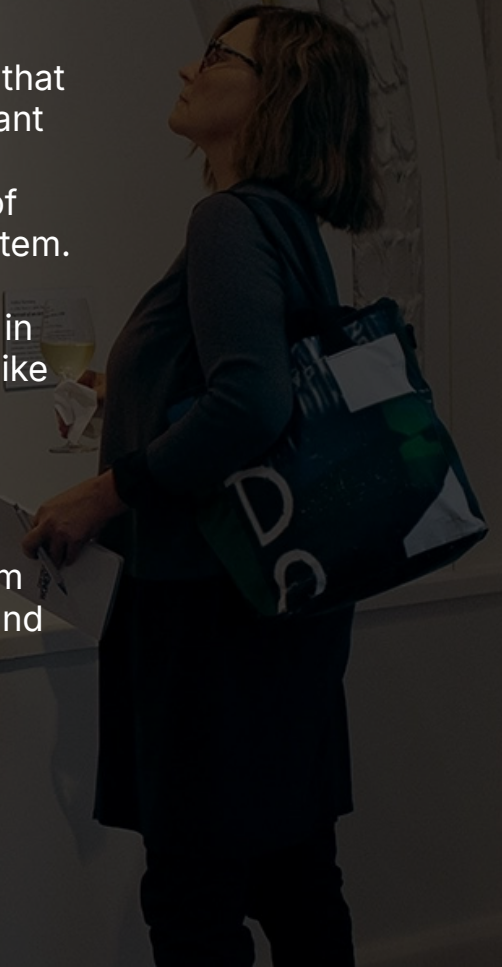
"I've been really impressed with Asset Bank's support system. Any time there's an issue—like a server issue—I reach out and they get back pretty quickly, which is amazing considering they're in a completely different country in a different timezone. I've experienced some bad support systems in the past, so I'm very impressed with this part of Asset Bank."

Dominique Manuel, Digital Asset Manager
National Museum of Women in the Arts

"I think Asset Bank has spoiled me because I find myself comparing other tools and products to it."

Elizabeth Ajunwa, Director, Library and Research Center (LRC)
National Museum of Women in the Arts

Contact

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