STARTUP FOCUSES ON LOCAL TOURISM

A multidisciplinary team from NC State created an online marketplace for those who seek genuine experiences with locals eager to share their communities. People-First Tourism also provides micro-entrepreneurial opportunities for small business owners to tap into varied tourist markets.

The university’s Office of Technology Transfer cites it as the first tech-based, social-venture from NC State.

The company describes its mission to leverage technology innovation and the economic force of tourism to inspire a world where people develop deep connections with their hosts, experience genuine local cultures, and improve the lives of people they visit.

Travelers can visit www.peoplefirsttourism.com to explore opportunities such as a farm visit in a rustic corner of North Carolina, a cooking lesson with indigenous women in a Costa Rican village, or a fishing tour on the Outer Banks.

The founders — Duarte Morais and Gene Brothers, of the College of Natural Resources, John Bass of Institute for Next Generation IT Systems and Tim Wallace of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences — have set up a fund at NC State where individual royalties would go toward student scholarships and research on ways tourism can benefit people at the grassroots.

Located at 310 S. Harrington St., Raleigh, People-First Tourism celebrated its launch in October.

BIGDIVA IMPROVES SEARCHES

Digital humanities scholars from NC State University and Texas A&M University recently launched a powerful new system to help researchers more quickly and accurately sift through hundreds of thousands of archives and articles related to materials dating from 450 A.D. to the 20th century.

“Our goal in developing BigDIVA was to create a tool to help us explore our cultural heritage and facilitate scholarship in fields ranging from literature and religion to art and world history,” says Tim Stinson, an associate professor of English at NC State and one of the project’s creators.

BigDIVA, which stands for Big Data Infrastructure Visualization Application, offers a visual interface for navigating scholarly, peer-reviewed humanities content, such as historical documents, images of art and artifacts, and any scholarship associated with those things.

The system displays results in an infographic format that is organized by category, such as journal articles or online digital collections. And color coding distinguishes those items you have immediate access to from items that a user doesn’t have permission or a subscription to access.

“Because BigDIVA’s content is curated, search results aren’t cluttered with irrelevant items. “Our plan is to market BigDIVA as a subscription-based service to libraries and the higher education community,” Stinson says.

Based on an idea by Texas A&M’s Laura Mandell, Stinson developed a proof-of-concept prototype with postdoctoral researcher Matt Davis and Markus Wust, a digital research and scholarship librarian at NC State. Mandell’s team at Texas A&M then rebuilt BigDIVA from the ground up to make it more user friendly.

The collaborators began testing the beta version of BigDIVA with target audiences earlier this year. Currently, BigDIVA’s strengths are topics from the medieval period and the 18th and 19th centuries — reflecting the research interests of Stinson and Mandell.

The team now is working closely with scholars of the Renaissance and the 20th century periods. BigDIVA was formally unveiled at the Hunt Library on NC State’s Centennial Campus.