



CASE STUDY



Guthrie Public Library Expands Patron Services with the VERSO® Integrated Library System

Challenge:

The Guthrie Public Library was founded in 1903 and remains the destination for information, enjoyment of reading and lifelong learning in the growing community of Guthrie Oklahoma and the surrounding Logan County. Housed in a 7,538 square foot establishment, the library currently offers over 26,700 items in its collection, to serve the community of over 37,000 people. The Guthrie Public Library is continually developing new programs and adding functionality to enhance the patron experience and engage their community - in the last year alone the library held 166 programs for children, teens and adults with an impressive 3,165 members attending.

The library had been using an automation system for 17 years that was designed for a school library and wasn't meeting the needs of the growing public. Several of the features were designed solely for the school library environment and were out of place and confusing for both staff and patrons, often times requiring a tedious work-around to accomplish day-to-day tasks. The system also had very limited reporting and statistical capabilities, which didn't allow library staff to accurately report on library activity having the potential to negatively impact staffing and library funding. The system was hosted by Guthrie Public Library owned servers and required extensive IT resources to maintain and run the software application locally.

The library management team began evaluating different integrated library systems (ILS) that were developed with a public library focus and came across several providers that offered robust systems but most were at a cost that were out of the library's price range. At an industry trade show the Library Director met with Auto-Graphics, which was currently delivering the interlibrary loan system provided through the Oklahoma Department of Libraries (ODL) and was very impressed by the features and functionality of the VERSO® integrated library system (ILS).

Solution:

After evaluating our Library Management Platform the Guthrie Public Library implemented a combined solution of Auto-Graphics' VERSO ILS and its SEARCHit™ federated search product selecting a Software as a Service (SaaS) based implementation. The library selected several add-on features available through third party vendors such as Syndetic's

Solutions' content enrichment suite including jacket art, book reviews, summaries, table of contents and other enriched content to make records more visually stimulating.

Through the Guthrie library branded website provided as a part of VERSO, patrons now have immediate access to a wealth of resources available to them through ODL funding, including thousands of articles from popular magazines, scholarly journals and regional newspapers. They can now also check account status, renew books online, confirm how many items they have checked out and when those items are due back to the library, request an item to be reserved and request an interlibrary loan.

The new system comes complete with a robust real-time statistics package available providing a full array of circulation, search and database statistics, web traffic, user statistics that can be accessed from any workstation inside or outside of the library with proper authentication. Circulation statistics are reported by patron categories, patron groups, location and material type thus providing the library a detailed view of activity in their library.

Additionally, real-time statistics are available for OPAC activity and library staff can view total searches and login requests by the hour or by the day.

"I can't believe all the functionality that we're able to offer through VERSO at less than a third of the cost of the other vendors we evaluated," remarked Melody Kellogg, then director of the Guthrie Public Library. "The customer support team was 'Johnny on the spot' during the implementation and has been diligent about constantly customizing, improving, modifying and enhancing the system during the implementation process to meet our requirements."

Results:

In the short amount of time that the Guthrie Public library has been utilizing VERSO they have experienced a phenomenal increase in usage in both circulation and searching of full text databases. Since implementing federated search, through SEARCHit, the Guthrie library has been able to better leverage the state investment in licensed content. In the first month alone both individual search sessions and total searches skyrocketed by over 100-fold in both cases.

"The VERSO implementation has allowed for a much smoother patron experience. It's the little things that I think are really making a difference, for example, the previous system didn't have the ability to reinstate a found book back into circulation that had already been paid for. Now it's as easy as clicking a button," said Kellogg. "We're seeing more and more people in the library. Anecdotally, while we have historically utilized one book cart to accept a typical days returned items, we now use two carts and frequently shelve more than once a day to keep up with the load."

Melody Kellogg went about educating her community about the new functionality available at the library by writing a series of articles which were published in the local newspaper The Guthrie Newsletter called Just So You Know highlighting

happenings at the library and new ways in which the community can access its many resources. The five year plan currently under development by Kellogg will offer extended hours to accommodate the growing interest and activity at the library.

“We love the SaaS-based solution, instead of utilizing our IT resources to fix a problem, we simply place a call to the Auto-Graphics support team, who solve the problem and call us back to let us know it’s taken care of. It saves us time and headache so that we can focus on patrons,” remarked Kellogg.

“We are amazed at what VERSO can do; we can easily retrieve statistical information for elected officials and city management such as the percentage of patrons served that are inside and outside of the city limits. VERSO also provides detailed statistics about all circulation activity, important for reporting vital data to ODL for funding initiatives. The previous system deleted information about items that we had to take out of the system due to loss, damage or just updating our collection. With the old system we could have had a banner year and the circulation statistics available wouldn’t provide an accurate depiction of our growing activity, issues we don’t have to worry about with VERSO.”

