



Otsego District Public Library, Otsego, Michigan

## **Otsego District Library Expands Patron Services New Touchscreen End Cap Catalogs powered by VERSO**

### **CHALLENGE**

What comes first: a great community or a great library? It takes a community of caring citizens to create a library, but once the relationship begins, great things become possible. The Otsego District Public Library has served its community of small city, suburban, and rural patrons since 1844, growing from a bookshelf in a private home to the full-service, state-of-the-art facility it is today. Inspired by the city motto “Love Otsego,” the library’s creative and dynamic program assures that there is plenty to love for patrons of all ages.

Providing an interface to the world of technology is a challenging part of the many services provided by Otsego District Library to its community of patrons. The library introduced its first computers in the late 1980s and added an automated online catalog and circulation system in 1993. Today, the library’s role as a source of public Internet access, which first became available at the library in 1996, remains one of its most used and most appreciated services.

When Library Director, Andrea Estelle, took the reins in 2013, she recognized the wonderful synergy that existed between the Otsego community and their library. “This really is my dream library to work for,” Estelle said in a press release. “The programming is already great and the technology on track.” Technology and early childhood education were two of her strong interests, and she challenged herself to innovate and continue to enhance services in both areas.

### **At the Heart of the Library: Innovation**

Estelle confirms that one of the library’s primary goals is innovation. With each aspect of programming and technology, the library seeks to stay on the cutting edge, providing patrons with the latest in ideas and information. “I would guess that only 50-75% of patrons have Internet at home,” Estelle says. “There are a great many who come to the library to access the Internet,” Estelle says.

At the center of Otsego District Library’s technological platform is VERSO®, Auto-Graphics’ library automation software. VERSO is built on a modular structure, offering maximum flexibility to libraries. This modular structure allows libraries to use only those functions that add value to their unique community. 100% Web responsive VERSO provides large and informative cover art to call attention to the library’s collection along with highlighted search results.

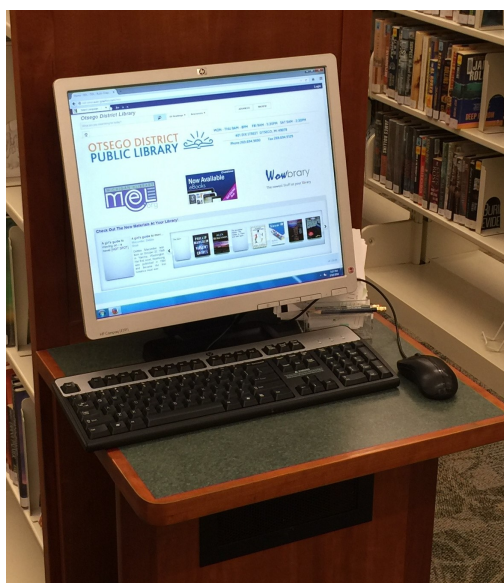
***“The whole project was implemented for around \$2000, a huge savings (90%!) over the initial quote.”***

## **CREATIVE SOLUTIONS**

### **Creating Searchable Touchscreen Catalog Bookshelf End Caps**

VERSO was in place at Otsego District Library when Andrea Estelle arrived in 2013. The system fit well with her lively creative eye, as it gives the library direct control over appearance and branding. “I found Auto-Graphics VERSO very user-friendly and easy to learn,” Estelle says. “I have loved Auto-Graphics’ VERSO. I think it’s very searchable, easy to use, and easy to train our staff on. I love that it’s affordable for a small library.”

In 2016, Estelle had an amazing idea for creating digital card catalogs on end caps in the library.



*Old Catalog Workstation*

“I wanted to replace our old computers on the end caps,” she says. “I said to our technology guys, ‘I would really like a giant iPad on these end caps for the patrons to search.’ Of course, that doesn’t exist quite yet.”

When Estelle googled her idea, she discovered some digital end caps at the Nashville Public Library, made by the company Anode. “They are very beautiful,” she says. “I called that



*Old Catalog Workstation*

company to see about getting those for our library, and it was going to be \$20,000 or more.” Estelle wanted to find a solution that would be compatible with the Otsego Library budget, but still have the sleek appearance.

“I looked for a very large touch screen monitor that was pretty sleek. I wanted it to be flush to our end cap but still quite big because I wanted to use it to display a slide show for our programs, like a bulletin board, when the catalog was not in use. I found some Acer monitors that were really large and flipped them vertically. We used tiny hard drives less than 10 inches square and hid them on the shelf behind the end cap. This let us get rid of the tables that were previously holding the monitors and the hard drive. Now we just have the beautiful monitor on the end, and patrons can go up and use it like a touch screen on a smart phone. In between catalog searches, it displays slides showing our programs. I’m really happy with how it worked out,” says Estelle.

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## **VERSO Provides Easy Advertising of Catalog Content and Other Library Services**

The versatility of VERSO’s Widget Manager, which enables customization of the library’s home page, was evident as Estelle notes another customization: “We added three widgets to the bottom of our VERSO home page to make scrolling covers of New Books, New Movies, and New Audiobooks. Since the touch screen works like a smart phone, patrons can easily scroll through the catalog with their fingertips, shrinking and enlarging as needed. The added widgets allow for easy searches through MELcat, Michigan’s interlibrary loan system; Overdrive, a selection of e-books; and Wowbrary, a listing of Otsego’s weekly top choices.”

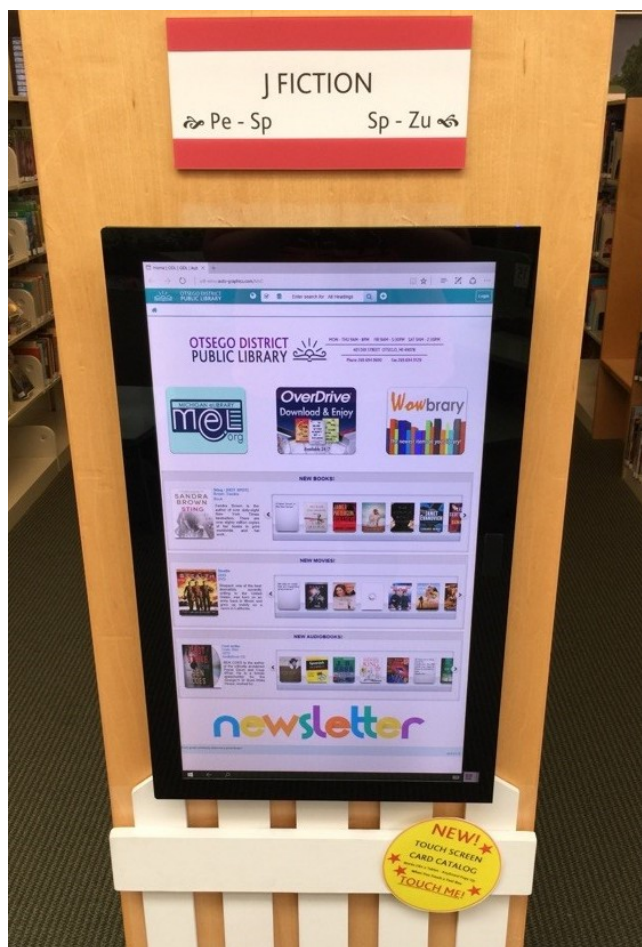
## **RESULTS**

According to Estelle, the library gets many positive patron comments on the digital card catalogs. “The kids and teens especially like using them.” The whole project was implemented for around \$2000, a huge savings (90%!) over the initial quote. “The digital end caps are used every day, all day long. There was a little bit of a training curve. We added a sign that said, ‘Touch Me, I’m the card catalog.’ At first, Patrons had to be shown how to use the touchscreen catalog, if they didn’t have a smart phone. With just a little bit of training, they were ready to go. And I noticed that the kids especially love searching the card catalog now.”

Using VERSO’s custom Showcase Widget enables the library to display jacket covers for new materials such as new movies, mysteries, audio books, or feature a specific collection, which has helped Estelle create the visual effects she looks for to engage patrons. “Because I’m a very visual person, I really like the widgets you can add on your main page. We utilize this feature to have a whole bunch of sliders at the bottom of our catalog page. With our new end caps, the look is awesome. You can see the new books, new movies, new audios all scrolling across the screen. I really like that you can customize your front page to have those widgets. I like how that screen looks when a patron comes to visit the catalog,” she says.

The Content Widget enabled Estelle to add to the catalog home page a colorful banner for the library’s newsletter. “We added a newsletter link at the bottom of the page with colors to keep it interesting and fun,” she says. In the summer newsletter, she shares the new Otsego District Library slogan: “Innovate – Interact – Inspire,” created as part of the spring 2016 revision of the library’s strategic plan. Future plans include continuing to provide innovative technology for all ages as the library expands its array of exciting opportunities for patrons to learn and enjoy.

Andrea Estelle can point to a very active volunteer program and highly successful fundraisers for library programs and acquisitions to illustrate the strong library and patron connection that Otsego has built. “Everybody does such a great job here,” she says. “I am really proud of our library. I think it shows how much the community cares about it.”



*New Touchscreen End Cap*



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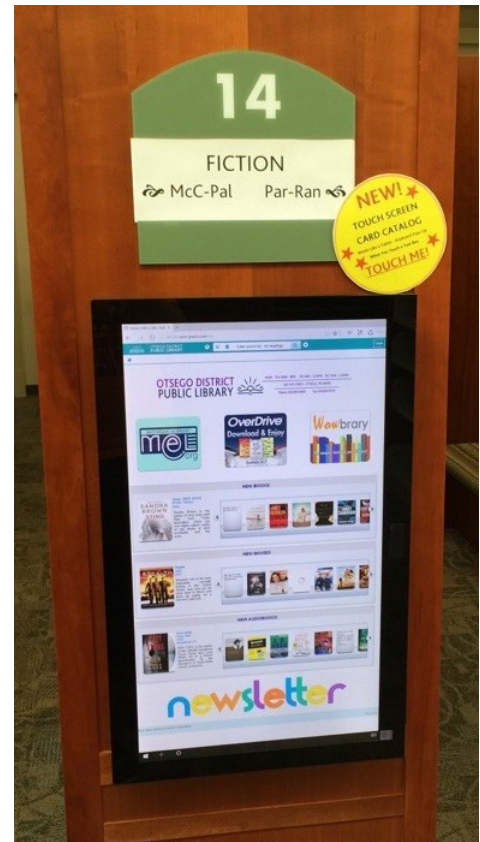
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## **About the Otsego District Public Library**

The Otsego District Public Library is a full-service public library offering book and audio-video collections, programs and services to the residents of Alamo Township, the City of Otsego, and Otsego Township in southwestern Michigan. The library moved into its present 18,400 square foot building in 2009. It houses 60,000 items available for checkout and is funded in large part by a district-wide millage voted in perpetuity by residents in 1996. Currently, the library has a staff of sixteen. From 60 to 80% of patrons have library cards. In 2016, visitors totaled 67,293, averaging 8 to 10,000 visitors a month.

The Otsego District Library’s stated mission is to enrich the community by connecting people with information, each other, and the world. They strive to provide a professional and welcoming atmosphere and enrich literacy, especially in children. They adapt to the community’s changing needs, reflecting the community’s character and heritage. The library is a true center of local activity and a valuable resource for the educational, cultural, and informational needs of its patrons.

The library is recognized for its superior Summer Reading Program and strong dedication to literacy programming for the children of the community. It offers a continual stream of programs for patrons of all ages that are educational and informative. It serves as a gathering space for meetings, book clubs, seniors’ groups, and toddler story hours. In June 2013, the library unveiled the Rise and Shine Early Literacy Center, and early literacy play space inside the unique Storytime House.



*New Touchscreen End Cap*



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