The Mississippi Library Commission Implements SHAREit™, Auto-Graphics' Interlibrary Loan (ILL) Solution

Challenge:

The Mississippi Library Commission (MLC) is an independent state agency established in 1926 by an Act of the Mississippi Legislature. The MLC was originally charged with giving advice, when asked, to schools and public libraries and to communities desiring to establish libraries. Further, MLC was required to obtain annual reports from all libraries in the state and to make a biennial report to the legislature of its work. The Act also authorized the Board of Commissioners for the MLC to purchase and operate traveling libraries. Today, the MLC offers a wide variety of direct and indirect services to the state's 50 public library systems, government agencies and the citizens of Mississippi.

Glenda Tilson is the MLC Library Services Division Director responsible for the development and management of the Commission's Primary Resource Library and related services. With few exceptions, materials in the MLC Resource Library collection are available for direct loan to libraries, and the MLC participates as a lender in the OCLC ILL System and in the Mississippi Statewide Virtual Union Catalog and ILL System.

The MLC also provides specialized services to employees and officials of Mississippi State government, including in-depth reference and research assistance, circulation of materials from the agency's Primary Resource Library, and interlibrary loan (ILL) of materials from other libraries for job-related needs. In addition to the general resource collection, the agency maintains an archival collection of state documents issued by Mississippi state agencies for the general public, and maintains specialized materials for patents and trademarks research.

A third party annually updated union catalog with an ILL system was used within Mississippi's library network for nearly 20 years. As more public libraries implemented local automation systems, the MLC saw an opportunity to employ a virtual ILL system that would help facilitate its mission to strengthen and enhance libraries and library services for all Mississippians. Based on that initiative, the MLC formed a committee to identify system criteria, then published an RFP to evaluate solution options based on: price, functionality, virtual database capabilities and quality of support. The MLC conducted a comprehensive competitive review of the various ILL products available, including Auto-Graphics' powerful and flexible ILL solution, SHAREit™.

Solution:

After a rigorous evaluation process of several leading ILL products, the Mississippi Library Commission selected SHAREit. The solution's flexibility is unique, offering multiple delivery options including Software as a Service (SaaS), licensing and hosted licensing. Based on the state's unique needs, the MLC decided to implement SHAREit on a SaaS basis, allowing it to save on the initial capital expense of system hardware and software, while benefiting from Auto-Graphics' data backup capabilities and continual technology upgrades. In addition, the SaaS model placed less of a burden on the MLC's IT resources to maintain the integrity of the system, translating to overall cost-savings and the flexibility to divert these scarce IT resources to other statewide initiatives.

Furthermore, SHAREit supports multiple ILL environments such as physical and virtual database systems, as well as a unique hybrid database system that offers the advantages of both physical and virtual systems. Weighing each option against the needs of the consortia, the MLC opted for implementing SHAREit in a virtual database environment. "Our goal was to have each consortia member library meet the Z39.50 standard before participating in our new statewide ILL system," remarked Tilson. "We began a phased roll-out to our member libraries that already met this minimum criteria, totaling 23 library systems so far, with the goal of having all 50 systems sharing the virtual database by the end of 2008."

Since SHAREit is ISO ILL compliant, the solution seamlessly supports requests sent among consortium members, as well as those to external trading partners. The system also includes support for NCIP, Generic Script, Email and fax ILL protocols. This was an advantage since the MLC already provided public libraries with access to OCLC for non-consortium borrowing, but needed a solution to aggregate and share public library data across disparate library systems to provide patrons with a much greater depth and breadth of resources.

Results:

The state of Mississippi has been very pleased with its interlibrary loan implementation, powered by SHAREit. "The solution is web-based so implementation has been quick and cost effective, enabling us to get half of our library systems up and running on the virtual ILL system in one year," said Tilson. "The product is very easy to use which has helped with technology adoption amongst library staff and patrons. As an example, several libraries are downloading MARC records from each other even though some have different ILS products in use."

Auto-Graphics has supported the MLC with its rollout program at the state-level, the library system level, and has even worked with ILS vendors working with individual libraries to make the ILL system work efficiently and seamlessly. Since SHAREit can sit on top of other 3rd party ILS systems, it supports unlimited resource access, connecting to all other ILL systems including OCLC, RLG, Fretwell-Downing, Relais, SirsiDynix, and National Library of Canada.

Auto-Graphics offers a distinct advantage as a library automation partner, as it is the only ILL vendor that offers a federated search product, SEARCHit™, and a feature-rich ILS product, VERSO®, in addition to its ILL product, SHAREit. All products work

in unison under the Auto-Graphics' integrated library automation platform. Furthermore, Auto-Graphics has the expertise to assist libraries using other library automation products and therefore delivering tangible benefits to all libraries operating within the state's consortia.

"Auto-Graphics has provided exceptional support to the MLC, quickly following through on any of our implementation, training and post-implementation support inquiries," said Tilson. "Our ultimate goal is to have all 240 of the MLC's library branches using SHAREit to provide their patrons with a greater level of service and resource options."

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Software that Powers the Library