

# SEARCHit™ a Robust Federated Search Application

# CASE STUDY



## **iCONN, Connecticut's Research Engine, utilizes SEARCHit™ technology to streamline searching of electronic databases**

### **Challenge:**

iCONN, Connecticut's Research Engine, a joint project of the Connecticut State Library and the Department of Higher Education, was established in 2000, when the Connecticut General Assembly provided funding for the purchase of licensed information databases for Connecticut's libraries, schools and colleges. iCONN was founded to ensure a core level of information resources, including secured access to licensed databases, was available to every citizen in Connecticut. It is administered by the Connecticut State Library in conjunction with the Department of Higher Education.

With a significant investment and impressive collection of licensed information databases available to the residents of Connecticut, iCONN realized that in order to manage and share these databases effectively, they would need a federated search tool that would allow simultaneous searching of the state's library catalogs, licensed content databases and the internet from a single-user interface. In 2003, iCONN formed a committee to evaluate various federated search technologies available and initiated a daunting RFP process that encompassed the existing statewide library catalog as well as federated searching technology and secure authentication.

### **Solution:**

After a rigorous review process, iCONN selected Auto-Graphics' SEARCHit product to provide user-friendly federated searching across all of Connecticut's available resources. Auto-Graphics, already Connecticut State Library's statewide library catalog and interlibrary loan system provider, was singled out among a wide range of competitive vendors as the company most capable of meeting iCONN's requirements.

The integration of the SEARCHit product provided iCONN with the ability to offer residents easy access to reliable information from anywhere. SEARCHit's federated search functionality was seamlessly added into the iCONN website interface, providing a consistent look and feel to the overall search experience. The end result was an information portal with the ability to search more than 25 licensed proprietary databases, as well as simultaneously search free online resources, Connecticut member library catalogs, Z39.50 targets, digital collections resources, archives and proprietary content repositories.

“Auto-Graphics’ tool for our statewide search portal allows our patrons to search across all databases provided by the state in one fell swoop. Through iCONN, Connecticut’s library patrons have access to authoritative, reputable content licensed by all of the state’s libraries within one convenient interface,” remarked Carol Kubala, Interlibrary Loan Librarian, Adult Services and ILL Cataloger for Saxton B. Little public library in Connecticut. “iCONN is like a one-stop shop.”

A key factor in selecting SEARCHit was its unique and flexible security functionality, which enables obtain access to resources provided by iCONN with traditional library card authentication, iCONN recently implemented a unique IP-based geolocation authentication functionality. The new location-based intelligence allows residents to remotely access electronic library resources from anywhere in Connecticut - without requiring a traditional library card for authentication. SEARCHit can validate individuals by verifying their IP addresses through a global IP authentication method that checks residents against a pool of in-state IP addresses. Once authenticated, residents may search and access all authorized resources from a single, online search interface.

“By utilizing this new technology for iCONN, we expect to increase usage of our State-licensed resources and streamline patron access to our online library resources, as well as make more information available to those who cannot physically access a brick and mortar library,” said Kendall F. Wiggin, Connecticut State Librarian.

## **Results:**

Connecticut residents and students have conducted 64 million searches through iCONN since its inception in July 2001, and usage in FY 2006 increased 75% over FY 2005 and 290% over FY 2004. The system simultaneously searches the catalogs of all 435 libraries represented in the statewide library catalog, as well as almost all other electronic resources made available by the state, while delivering aggregated and configurable results. Furthermore, SEARCHit provides comprehensive statistical reporting capabilities, allowing iCONN to assess and refine subscriptions to resources that are most frequently used by residents.

“Converting to Auto-Graphics’ web-based library automation platform for the ILL and federated search capabilities has provided us with accurate and detailed information on our consortium’s holdings. The solution has more robust, standards-based functionality and an intuitive, user-friendly tool for our patrons, which has been paramount to mass adoption and patron satisfaction. We have the additional benefit of having the entire solution available to us on a fully hosted Software as a Service (SaaS) basis, taking the IT, administrative and maintenance hassles off our shoulders.” commented Kendall F. Wiggin, Connecticut State Librarian.

“We’re fortunate to have been able to provide continued service to the state of Connecticut, helping them achieve the goal of creating a farreaching, state-wide digital library to meet the needs of an increasingly technology-savvy populace,” stated Auto-Graphics’ President Paul Cope. “We are delighted to see the impressive growth in the number of residents taking advantage of iCONN over the last few years. We look forward to continuing a long partnership with iCONN and its members.”

### **Solution Accolades:**

iCONN was awarded a Certificate of Commendation from the Affiliate Assembly of the American Association of School Librarians, a division of the American Library Association. The Certificate was awarded “in recognition of valuable contributions to the field of school librarianship.” The accompanying letter further stated that “[by] providing an online database of reference materials and journals free to every school and home in the state, you are giving everyone equal access to a wealth of materials. With school districts struggling with budget constraints, this service means that no matter the socioeconomic status of a locality, quality information is available to all.”

