East Hampton Public Library Realizes a 75% Reduction in the Number of Allocated Staff Hours to Perform ILL Tasks after Implementing Auto-Graphics' Circulation-Interlibrary Loan Link (CILL)

The East Hampton Public Library, in East Hampton, Connecticut, was founded in 1898 and became a department of town government in 1986. The library serves a community with a local population of over 12,000 residents and houses a collection of at least 65,000 items, including books, books on CD, DVDs and newspaper and magazine subscriptions, and participates in approximately 1,500 interlibrary loan (ILL) transactions each year. Led by Library Director Sue Berescik and supported by a collaborative team of two additional full-time and 11 part-time staff members, the library provides a range of online services and employs an array of library 2.0 tools to further engage the public.

Challenge:

The East Hampton Public Library deployed VERSO® as its integrated library system (ILS) in 2005 to replace an outdated, unsupported and costly legacy Dynix system. In contrast, VERSO offers the library a single, comprehensive staff interface, an intuitive, customizable OPAC and the ability to accommodate staff and patron-level display preferences. The library opted for the Software as a Service (SaaS) hosted delivery method with full system support, maintenance and updates, allowing internal staff to focus on expanding patron services without the additional cost and complexity of addressing technical support issues.

Though VERSO offered the East Hampton Public Library more streamlined access to existing state-funded, Auto-Graphcis-powered resources - iCONN, Connecticut's research engine providing federated search, and reQuest, Connecticut's statewide bibliographic Union database and ILL system - the staff were still contending with duplicative workflow issues when processing ILL requests. With ILL transactions being managed through two separate systems, VERSO and reQuest, East Hampton Public Library staff members were left with a time-consuming and labor-intensive process.

"Our previous ILS featured resource sharing as a component of the shared circulation system. On migration to VERSO, we lost the 'open holds' function but gained on the public access to the resource sharing side. That is, using VERSO and reQuest, we were able to offer our patrons access to statewide resources rather than a subset of same," said Berescik.

When an ILL requested item arrived at the East Hampton Public Library, library staff were required to manually create a temporary brief catalog entry, place the item on reserve, physically notify the patron that the item had arrived and finally check the item out to the patron. Also, in order to complete check-in once the item was returned, library staff had to again interface with both the ILS and ILL systems, deleting the temporary brief catalog entry on VERSO, marking the item as returned and then shipping the item back to the lending library.

"Staffing is the largest component of any library budget and end-to-end; ILL transactions tend to be labor intensive. As local attraction to statewide resource lending and borrowing took hold, we took a critical look at the labor involved to support the new process," commented Berescik. "We were looking to improve service to our patrons while at the same time reducing staff workload associated with ILL. We were also looking for ways to avoid having to manage ILL on reQuest in isolation of circulation on VERSO."

Solution:

In February 2008, the East Hampton Public Library deployed Auto-Graphics' Circulation-Interlibrary Loan Link (CILL) to streamline workflow and greater empower patrons to initiate and track their own ILL transactions. CILL marries the borrowing and lending functionality between VERSO, East Hampton's ILS system, and reQuest, the library's ILL system, into a single system. The CILL module utilizes the best of the NISO Circulation Interchange Protocol (NCIP) standard, which defines a set of messages to lend and borrow items and seamlessly exchanges messages between circulation and ILL applications.

On the borrowing side, library staff receiving an ILL requested item simply marks an item as received, and VERSO automatically verifies the status of the requesting patron, creates a brief catalog record, notifies the patron via email that the requested item has arrived and checks the item out to the patron. Additionally, the brief catalog record that is created is marked as 'unavailable' in the local catalog.

On the lending side, the CILL module provides the East Hampton Public Library with the ability to check the availability of an item seamlessly, place holds if appropriate and check out the item directly through the circulation system. The CILL-enabled system also has the ability to issue recalls and overdue notices to reQuest.

Our patrons never understood and were confused by the need to use 'two systems.' CILL eliminates the confusion and patron need to toggle back and forth between VERSO and reQuest. The integrated software offers a conformed view; is patron-friendly; and uses an 'I want this' button which, from our service perspective, is all that matters," said Berescik.

The East Hampton Public Library staff can review and process the patron-initiated ILL requests without having to perform any data entry. With CILL, patrons have the ability to review the status of their ILL request and circulation transactions online and have the option to receive email updates as the status information becomes available, further cutting down on the staff time needed to process ILL requests. The East Hampton Public Library also has the ability to offer a variety of other patron-friendly

features, such as queue thresholds for books on hold, which automatically gives a patron the option to submit an ILL request should there be too many holds placed on a specific local item.

Results:

Since deploying CILL in 2008, the East Hampton Public Library has seen dramatic results that have significantly freed up staff time and provided cost savings to the library. With CILL, the East Hampton Public Library's borrowing workflow has been reduced from 22 steps without CILL down to 11 steps with CILL, and the lending workflow has been reduced from 14 steps without CILL to 8 steps with CILL.

Operationally, we allocate staff hours by service area; ILL is one of them," remarked Berescik. "Roughly speaking, CILL has allowed us to reduce the amount of time we spend on ILL borrowing and lending requests by 55.5 %, while increasing our ILL volume from 1,472 requests in 2007 to 2,449 requests in 2009, or a 66% increase. Our library staff would not have been able to handle the significant increase in ILL requests without CILL. We continue to see the greatest staff time savings on the borrowing side. End-to-end, borrowing supported by CILL takes 61% less time to execute than those that require staff intervention."

Berescik also reported that the efficiencies provided by CILL in the reduction of steps to complete transactions has allowed staff to provide less time 'on-system' time managing interlibrary loan requests:

- Before CILL, about 20 of 24 allocated staff hours per week were spent on interlibrary loan, or 83.3% of the hours allocated for ILL.
- After CILL, 5 of 18 allocated staff hours per week are spent on interlibrary loan, or 27.8% of the hours allocated for ILL.

"ILL continues to be labor intensive; however, with CILL, the labor has less to do with 'on-system' effort than tasks that will always be manual. Many of these manual tasks have been reassigned to less expensive staff," said Berescik.

"Overall CILL has provided us with time savings both in the form of fewer hours and a lower percentage of total hours spent on ILL. This has provided us with the opportunity to divert resources to supporting public programs, person-to-person services, and both traditional and technological outreach efforts. We consider this a substantial achievement."

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