

CASE STUDY



Primo Provides Vanderbilt University with a Platform to Serve User Needs

Vanderbilt University was founded as a private research institute in 1873. Located in Nashville, Tennessee, Vanderbilt enrolls over 11,000 students and employs over 17,500 staff and faculty. The university offers undergraduate degrees in the liberal arts and sciences, engineering, music, and education, as well as a range of graduate and professional degrees including medicine and law.

Challenges

Vanderbilt's library systems were not keeping up with user expectations for modern and easy-to-use search and access capabilities. Resources were difficult to find and as a result were underused by Vanderbilt library patrons.

Solution

Primo provides a unified front-end to the discovery and delivery of library material of all kinds, including print, electronic, and digital, as well as special collections such as the Vanderbilt Television News Archive.



With holdings of over three million volumes, approximately 30,000 serials and journals, and a unique compilation of digital content, Vanderbilt University needed a powerful integrated discovery and delivery tool that would provide easy access to its vast collections. An Ex Libris™ Primo® development partner, Vanderbilt selected Primo for its ability to present library patrons with a user-friendly interface and single entry point to all print, electronic, and digital resources.

Focus on the End User

In early 2006, administrators and staff began developing a new vision for library technology that would better serve their patrons. "Our strategic planning process led us to understand that we needed to focus on the end user and that a lot of our current systems didn't do that so well," says Paul Gherman, Vanderbilt's University librarian.

To meet this goal, Vanderbilt began looking for a system that would provide a single entry point to all library resources, encompassing the online catalog, electronic journals, and digital collections, including the unique U.S. Television News Archive. Dating back to 1968, this is the world's most complete collection of television news, comprising over 30,000 broadcasts.

Results of an assessment survey conducted at Vanderbilt demonstrated that patrons viewed the library Web site as difficult to use, prompting the library to seek an updated and friendlier interface that would provide powerful integrated search capabilities.

"It was important that the solution we implemented go beyond access to the online public access catalog (OPAC)," explains Gherman. "We spend half of our collection budget on electronic content, so we want to make sure that users can easily find and get these resources."

Although prepared to contribute significant resources towards a new discovery and delivery system, Vanderbilt could not spare the time to develop such system on its own. The university selected the Primo solution and became one of the development partners for the product. "Ex Libris is focused on the needs of academic libraries," says Gherman. "The amount of effort they have put into the product has been extraordinary. As development partners, we have always felt that we had our say in the process."

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Results

Vanderbilt patrons as well as users not affiliated with the institution are now able to find and access a wide range of library material via a single user-friendly interface featuring enhanced search capabilities.



A New User Experience

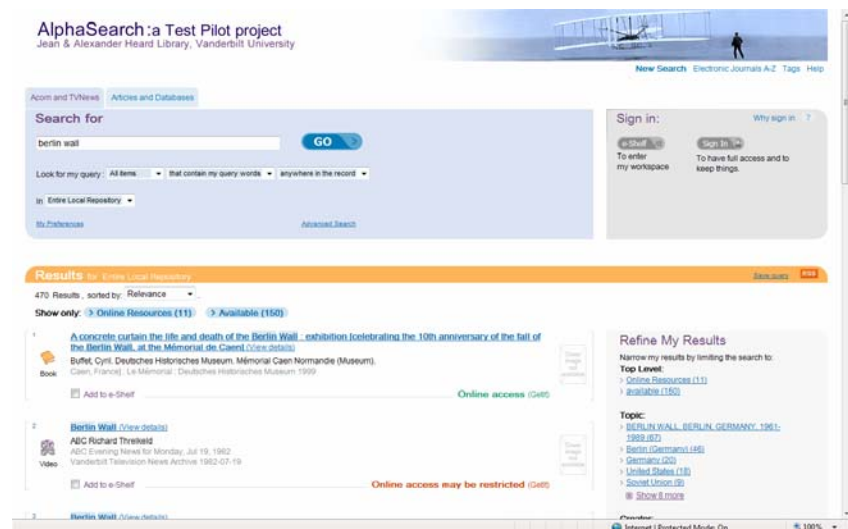
With Primo providing a single point of entry to all material types, users are no longer required to search multiple places for material in different formats. The intuitive interface empowers users to simultaneously search all library holdings.

“A really nice feature of Primo is the ability to enhance the basic bibliographic record with the authority record,” says Marshall Breeding, director for Innovative Technologies and Research for the Vanderbilt University Library. If a patron uses search terms that do not match the MARC record, Primo utilizes the authority record to guide the user to the right content. Primo also features the model of record grouping defined in the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR), which enhances dynamic searching capabilities. “That’s a complex thing to do and I think Primo is one of the early products to make an attempt at doing that,” adds Breeding.

According to Breeding, as important as search is, the delivery component of Primo is critical. “In the electronic world, the vision is that you search, you find it, you click, and you view it. In the print world, we need to make sure that users can get the material, whether it’s on the shelf, in a storage facility, or made available through interlibrary loan.

Greater Access to All Library Resources

With Primo in place, material that was previously hidden in Vanderbilt’s collections and on its Website is now easy to discover. Items from the Vanderbilt Television News Archive are now incorporated into the Primo unified search interface provided for Vanderbilt students and scholars around the world.



A search in Vanderbilt’s Primo system showing results from the library catalog and the Vanderbilt Television News Archive

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Resources are constantly being added to indexes in Primo, allowing users to search and receive immediate access to an ever-increasing breadth of material. “I hope that not only Vanderbilt but also the larger library world is moving toward locally indexing all article-level content, so it can be searched on equal footing with book content,” says Breeding.

In time, Primo will provide access to all of the library’s materials—print, electronic, digital, and whatever comes next—from one point of entry. “Primo is really a front end for all the things that ultimately we want to offer to our users,” explains Breeding.

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