

Idaho's fastest growing higher education institution takes learning off-campus

Library offers eBooks and eAudiobooks to support distance learners and around-the-clock research needs



Situation

The College of Southern Idaho (CSI) has a unique distinction in the state: it is the only higher education institution within a 120-mile radius of Twin Falls. The majority of its students come from the surrounding eight rural counties and many never set foot on the main campus. “Being the only college or university around, we’ve always had an emphasis on distance learning,” says Dr. Edit Szanto, Library and Instructional Technology Center Director.

Blackboard and teleconferencing systems are just some of the tools used over the years to serve remote students. The two-year community college also runs five off-campus centers to hold classes and other activities. However, these centers don’t offer libraries. While daily interoffice mail deliveries allow the main library to send limited materials to the centers, resources simply cannot support building and managing collections at each location.

Solution

“The role of the library is to support all of our students,” says Szanto. “So two years ago we made a push to deliver services that our patrons could use anywhere at anytime.”

Szanto and her staff spoke to several eContent vendors and **compared offerings, services, costs and usability before ultimately deciding on NetLibrary** for eBooks and eAudiobooks. “The NetLibrary interface is intuitive and easy to use,” says Szanto. “Students, faculty and staff can access these resources without a log-in on our campus and they can use their regular log-in to access the information from off-campus.”

AT A GLANCE

- Two-year community college in Twin Falls, Idaho
- Serves more than 7,000 traditional and nontraditional students
- Fastest growing higher education institution in Idaho
- Operates a main campus and five off-campus centers
- NetLibrary collection: 5,252 eBooks and 1,287 eAudiobooks

“Students like the search feature so much they started to ask for eBook versions of their textbooks.”

“And, if you know students,” adds Szanto, “you know they procrastinate.” **So now they can do their research at any hour of night.** Even the night before a paper is due.

Results

User feedback indicates that the **NetLibrary eBook collection is mainly used for homework assignments, research papers, presentations and team projects.** Students commented that they like being able to easily search online for a particular eBook, and then search within it to find specific information. In fact, says Szanto, students like the search feature so much they started to ask for eBook versions of their textbooks.

Although eBooks and eAudiobooks are still relatively new at CSI, usage is continually growing. Currently, users can access more than 5,200 eBooks and nearly 1,300 eAudiobooks. During FY2005—the second year the materials were offered—**eBook usage increased 121 percent and eAudiobook usage increased 102 percent.**

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From the library's perspective, says Szanto, eBooks and eAudiobooks provide many advantages. "They help us serve the needs of our geographically dispersed users, as well as save us time in selection, acquisition, cataloging, technical services and even shelf space." And because the resources are available 24/7, there is less pressure to increase library hours, which allows the budget to be spent on adding new materials.

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