

eBooks support a university system's e-content strategy

NetLibrary serves nine universities and six medical institutions



Situation

The original e-content strategy for the University of Texas at Austin Libraries focused on assembling a comprehensive collection of e-journals. “We were adding e-journals right and left,” says Dennis Dillon, Associate Director of Research Services. The collection proved successful with faculty and students, and as Internet access increased, so did the demand for e-content.

Then administrators asked themselves: What’s missing? “It was books,” explains Dillon. “eBooks were missing from our collection.” Adding eBooks, the library staff concluded, would not only serve the users on campus, but also a new and growing group: distance learners. So, in 1998, they invested in a small collection of NetLibrary eBooks to gauge user interest.

Solution

The staff first purchased 500 eBooks and, with little fanfare, made them accessible through a link in the library’s list of available databases. “We went back and checked after five months and were surprised at the usage,” Dillon recalls. Though not actively promoted to students and faculty, the collection had still attracted a large number of users. “We didn’t know what to expect at first, but it became apparent we should make more purchases.”

In addition to expanding the collection, the staff increased visibility of the eBooks. They loaded each title into the library catalog, which included a direct link to the NetLibrary interface. **Usage increased by a factor of 10.**

Another change was to make the collection available to the University of Texas System, a consortium of 15 universities

AT A GLANCE

University of Texas System

- 15 academic and medical institutions
- 45,000 eBook titles with 73,000 copies
- 95 percent of eBook collection is through NetLibrary
- Supports more than 175,000 students and 15,000 faculty on campus and through distance learning

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and medical institutions. “We conducted cost studies on eBook acquisitions and this has proven to be the best route for us,” says Dillon. He explains that **the ability to make title-by-title selections** through the NetLibrary Title Direct service is ideal for his consortium. Each month, Dillon works with more than 45 advisors to select and purchase up to 2,000 new titles, representing a broad range of subjects. Being able to buy individual titles instead of groups of titles better serves the consortium members’ needs.

Results

Today, nearly 95 percent of the consortium’s eBook collection is through NetLibrary. As a result, the consortium is standardizing on NetLibrary. **“The consistency makes a world of difference for our users,”** says Dillon. “They now have one place to access the eBooks.” Links to the collection can also be found in course reading lists on the university’s Blackboard Learning System, as well as

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embedded in articles on the university Web site.

“Feedback from students and faculty has been strong,” says Dillon. And they continue to ask: ‘Why not this title or that title?’ **“They want more,”** he says.

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For more information about NetLibrary collections, visit www.oclc.org/NetLibrary/, call 1-800-848-5878, ext. 6251 or send e-mail to libservices@oclc.org.