

Ball State Improves Workflows and Optimizes Resource Discovery

BALL STATE UNIVERSITY



The hub for study and research on the Ball State University campus in Indiana is the Alexander M. Bracken library. Two other libraries are located in separate buildings: the Architecture Library and the Science-Health Science Library. Forty-two full time librarians and professional staff, and 75 paraprofessionals, oversee 1,078,583 volumes, 16,701 electronic journals, 2,275 eBooks and 72,279 audiovisual titles.

Brad Faust, Assistant Dean for Library Information Technology Services, and Jim Hammons, Head of Library Technologies, supervise the library IT services teams to ensure that library technology systems are working smoothly. Among his many responsibilities, Brad manages the customization of Web applications, acquires resources for Jim's unit, and oversees the fleet of 700 desktop and laptop PCs used by

library staff and patrons. Jim's unit administers the libraries' enterprise systems (ILS, ILLiad, Serials Solutions 360 services etc.) and manages the EZProxy server for off campus access. Jim also is the primary technical contact for e-resources.

In early 2008, the libraries' need to add federated search became critical. Brad says, "In 2005, we asked about federated search and decided to wait to implement a search service. In 2008, we picked up where we left off in 2005 and saw how 360 Search had developed over time. We really appreciated what Serials Solutions had done not only with that service but also with their other services, all of which integrated. That was a key point for us when we were talking about value for price. Integration among the various 360 services was crucial to our successful implementation."

"Serials Solutions has enabled us to move forward so much more quickly."

Brad Faust

Another impetus for the decision was concern about the underutilization of paid licensed resources. Dr. Arthur W. Hafner, Dean of University Libraries, recognized the need for a federated search solution that would provide students and faculty much broader access to the resources. Brad continues, "360 Search really opened up user access to our licensed resources — we saw search results in the first 30 days that equaled the usage of the resources for the previous six months."

When the Ball State University Libraries decided to implement the 360 Search federated search service, the institution decided to also investigate the entire suite of 360 e-resource access and management services. Jim explains, "We were having some internal workflow problems keeping our knowledgebase up to date. There was no integration between the systems we had, so they were never a hundred percent in sync. It was more and more difficult to keep up with changes and the knowledgebase became increasingly inaccurate. All of this highlighted the need for a better way to manage our electronic resources."

Brad says, "We asked ourselves, 'What's it going to take to move from our local ERM solutions and current OpenURL link resolver?' We knew it would be very difficult to do any linking or integration with our current knowledgebase. When we compared the cost, functionality and peer institution experiences, it just made sense to subscribe to the whole Serials Solutions suite, using the Serials Solutions knowledgebase. Plus, integration of all the services was huge for us. Using Serials Solutions has enabled us to move forward so much more quickly. We are able to provide better access to quality information resources to our students than we were ever able to in the previous environment."

“Integration of data is huge in that it turned the workflow around and improved communication among the units that are responsible for different parts of the process.”

Brad Faust

The 360 Search federated search service was implemented in the fall of 2008. Serials Solutions 360 Link and 360 Resource Manager were added in mid-May. The 360 MARC Updates service was implemented in September 2009. Jim says, “360 MARC Updates will enhance our OPAC and the information will be managed in the Client Center. We are very excited about how that works. 360 Counter e-resource assessment service is the last piece of the suite to be fully implemented and we know that the functionality to upload cost data and analyze cost usage comparisons will be very valuable to managing the library budget.”

The library staff has responded positively to Serials Solutions 360. Brad says, “Integration of data in the 360 services is huge in that it has turned our workflow around and improved communication among the units that are responsible for different parts of the process. 360 Core provides our collection development reviewers much better data to compare titles in one aggregated database against another. With 360 Resource Manager, our librarians have access to all kinds of information right away. Now, within the Client Center (administrative interface), they can structure reports themselves instead of asking IT to run them. It frees time and empowers them to get the information they need to complete their work more quickly rather than wait in line for IT. That makes my group happy because we can work on developing exciting new applications instead of duplicating applications already developed by vendors.”

Jim adds, “For library patrons, the second the ‘switch’ was flipped on 360 Search, we were instantly in better shape than we were with our combined previous systems, even before completing the migration to 360 Resource Manager. We have seen a much lower number of reports of problems with linking to e-journals coming through our technical support system.” He continues, “I underestimated the enthusiasm our technical folks have had for this type of change. We put together a Working Group for the implementation of 360 Resource Manager and they were at the table to brainstorm and help plan the process. They are enthusiastic about the opportunities to do their jobs with better tools. “We’re also seeing changes in task assignments. Because the new tools keep track of license information in a shareable format, the person who manages the electronic collection has been able to pass along a lot of what he used to do when processing electronic resources. And, in cataloging, they are better able to maintain the metadata for individual electronic journal titles which has transformed cataloging routines.”

Brad says that financially, “We have budget headaches like everyone else these days, but even in tough budget times, our Dean continues to talk about being in a growth mode. It’s not about reducing staff but rather about re-purposing and finding efficiencies with what we have. 360 has helped us move towards that goal fairly substantially.” Both Brad and Jim are clear on the big wins for the BSU libraries with the implementation of Serials Solutions 360: Integration of all services, particularly how well a single interface works for users; 360 Search “because it is a consolidated starting point for virtually any academic project”; higher-quality data all the way down to the title level and being able to deliver that information more accurately to students and faculty.

The IT unit in the Ball State University Libraries is also very happy with customer care from Serials Solutions. Jim says, “All of the Serials Solutions staff has been excellent. They know what they are talking about and they go out and get answers. They ‘talk our talk’. We really like that Serials Solutions services are available as Software as a Service. A few years ago we were suspicious and wary of not having our information on servers we can control. Now, we really like having our data hosted externally. Overall, it has worked out very well and we love not having to manage the system in-house.”

Find out more!

1-866-SERIALS (737-4257)

360@serialssolutions.com

www.serialssolutions.com

© Copyright 2010 by Serials Solutions, Seattle, WA, USA. All rights reserved.