

The University of Wyoming Delivers E-Resources to Students throughout the State Using Serials Solutions® 360 Services



Boasting an outstanding faculty of 580 and world-class research facilities, the University of Wyoming has an enrollment of 13,000 students and supports over 3000 distance students throughout the state. The school also maintains the UW/Casper College Center, nine outreach education centers across Wyoming, and Cooperative Extension Service centers in each of the state's 23 counties and on the Wind River Indian Reservation. There are five libraries in the university system

housing a collection of 1.5 million volumes. It also hosts an extensive journal collection with 60% in electronic format. As a doctoral institution, the collections are heavily used by faculty and graduate students. In addition to the buildings on-campus, the library has a branch for research on the shores of Lake Jackson in the Grand Teton National Park.

The Associate Dean of Libraries, Lori Phillips, oversees nine department heads and managers of the operating units. With the diversity of students and locations across the 97,000 square miles of the state, the strategic direction of the library is to make resources available electronically as much as possible and to make accessing the e-collection as seamless as possible for users.

After internally managing the electronic collection for three or four years, Lori and her staff were concerned that the process was becoming too unwieldy. Managing the collection was getting more and more complex and the work was consuming too much time. At the time, there was a staff position dedicated to updates but the workload was too large. Additional staff would have had to be carved from the Collections Department which already was stretched.

The librarians faced another dilemma. As managing the collection got more complex, accessing information became more confusing and frustrating for the users. It became increasingly difficult to explain the landscape in a way users would understand. Having already made the strategic and financial leap to e-resources, and recognizing the unique management issues inherent with a growing e-collection, they began examining the available software solutions for meeting their access and management needs. It was critical that whatever they decided to use resulted in a seamless transition to an improved user experience. Simply put, they wanted people to be able to find the information easily.

"In this day, when students are so wired and are accustomed to using Google™ and other Internet search engines, instant response is expected. Serials Solutions delivers paid content to the user in the best way. We value them as a partner."

Lori Phillips

In the search for the best software, the project team found that Serials Solutions had developed the tools they needed to handle and manage collections and, most importantly, present the materials to the public. Lori was very pleased that "the Serials Solutions services enabled the library to build an infrastructure that provides a user experience without too many decision points and is seamless for customers. In addition, the services were a good fit to maximize ROI."

The library started using Serials Solutions services in 2006. There were several reasons for choosing the company. First of all, the pricing structure with a subscription plan gave them some breathing room. In 2006, parts of the services were in development and Lori's team was not comfortable with a large capital outlay for services that were very promising but still being developed. Consequently, trying Serials Solutions on a subscription basis was really appealing.

Secondly, Lori and her team had a lot of confidence in what they saw, "All bases were covered with the 360 Services and 360 MARC Updates was especially appealing. We had abandoned all hope until 360 MARC Updates came about." During the implementation of 360 Search they found that it works very well for users with focused searches but less well for users who aren't quite clear on their topic search. This is true of federated search engines in general but clustering does help prevent information overload for the users. Lori found the people at Serials Solutions willing to work with her and her staff on ideas for more advanced services and solutions to quandaries like the federated search issue.

The library implemented 360 Link, 360 Search, 360 MARC Updates, 360 Resource Manager, and 360 Core. "While they didn't breeze through implementation, the staff got through the learning curve relatively quickly because of the help they received from the Library Services team." During implementation, the staff depended greatly on the Serials Solution Library Services team, and was very pleased with service offered by the company. Eight percent of the Library Services team are librarians or have a library background. Lori found that they understand the issues and were very responsive to questions.

The overall goal of delivering a seamless interface and improved customer service has been met. Lori explains that the library conducted two campus wide surveys through LibQual: one in 2004 and then again in 2007. The surveys were of faculty, graduate and undergraduate student representatives and measured user satisfaction with several levels of library quality including service, information control and place.

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In 2004, users expressed frustration because they didn't understand how e-resources were organized and were having limited success getting the results they needed. By 2007, users were more satisfied with their ability to access electronic resources. The library received positive feedback about the ease of accessing library e-journal information. Lori says, "We attribute that in part to Serials Solutions. Having Serials Solutions as the scaffolding behind the information helps our users find resources quickly and easily."

In addition to the results librarians were expecting, some features also exceeded expectations. When Lori presented Citation Finder to the University Dean's Council they were excited to see a service that gave them just what they needed. Lori stated that "the faculty needs resources quickly and for that purpose, Citation Finder is very, very valuable. It has been marketed to administration, faculty and graduate students with great success."

The librarians continue to be delighted with 360 MARC updates. This service provides the library access and control it would not be able provide on its own. Given limited staffing and competing priorities, librarians were not able to keep up with the OPAC updating work that is now done so quickly and easily by the 360 MARC Updates service. With 380 databases and 140 database platforms, they discovered that this OPAC updating service saved considerable time and expense. It enables staff to concentrate on work that is less repetitive, more interesting, and more valuable.

Now they can concentrate on projects that require a higher level of judgment and professional knowledge. More time can be spent on building the collection by identifying, selecting, and acquiring the best resources instead of repetitiously entering data. As more and more electronic resources are requested and strategically added to the collection, it's very important for librarians who work directly with patrons to have the tools they need to access the resources and provide the best service. Lori Phillips and her staff are confident they are offering the very best service they can because of Serials Solutions. Lori said, "In this day, when students are so wired and are accustomed to using Google™ and other Internet search engines, instant response is expected. Serials Solutions delivers paid content to the user in the best way. We value them highly as a partner."

Find out more!

1-866-SERIALS (737-4257)

360@serialssolutions.com

www.serialssolutions.com

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