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Gregg Atkins
gregg.atkins@cclccc.org

Cloud-based Library Platform Keeps California Community College Libraries Operational During COVID-19 Crisis **System is Now Live at 110 California Community Colleges**

The statewide Library Services Platform (LSP) project successfully transitioned an unprecedented single-year cohort of 110 participating California community college libraries to the shared platform in January 2020. This rapid and timely adoption positioned college libraries to immediately adapt to remote work and learning practices following a statewide shelter-in-place order in March due to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic.

Furthering the California Community Colleges (CCC) *Vision for Success*, the cloud-based LSP implements a unified resource management system across all participating college libraries and gives students throughout the system greater and more equitable access to library resources.

With campuses throughout California now closed indefinitely, the LSP has allowed college libraries to keep the virtual lights on, enabling library staff, faculty and student workers to transition to an online work environment, while giving students uninterrupted access to library resources.

“The statewide LSP platform has been an instrumental component to bring all library services online in this time of crisis,” said Jeffrey Sabol, Librarian at Long Beach City College. “From students accessing electronic resources and ebooks to being able to check their library record and renew books online, the LSP has facilitated these services. Beyond the new and enhanced services the LSP has enabled, it is the collective might of all of the CCCs working together so that no college has to duplicate the work that has already been accomplished by another CCC, ensuring that the unique population we serve has high quality services even when the physical libraries are closed.”

“During the Covid-19 crisis I’ve discovered that, because our library is a new Alma/Primo library, we have been able to safely, efficiently, and effectively add new resources, update them, and share those resources with Shasta College students and faculty who have been required to get up to speed with online instruction very quickly,” said Cheryl Cruse, Technical Processing Librarian at Shasta College. “Working remotely, the Shasta College library staff is able to continue to provide information and assistance to our college community.”

Widespread Support for LSP

The LSP project has garnered widespread support throughout the community colleges and was recently the recipient of the CCC Chancellor’s Office Technology Focus Award, which highlights projects within the system that “solve significant problems to the benefit of students, staff and/or faculty.”

The LSP project is a collaboration of the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office and the CCC Technology Center, in close partnership with the Council of Chief Librarians for the California Community Colleges.

Implementation costs, including training and support, and the first year's subscription for the library platform, Ex Libris Alma/Primo VE, were funded by a one-time apportionment. The CCC Board of Governors supported \$4 million/year ongoing funding for the project in both their 2018-19 and 2019-20 budget requests. Funding beyond June 30, 2020, has yet to be secured. The Council of Chief Librarians, the LSP Governance Committee, and stakeholder partners strongly advocate for continued centralized funding of the project.

Future Uncertain

The LSP project is off to a remarkable start, but there is still much work to be done. A central network is being constructed that will lead to greater efficiencies, better collection development, statewide analytics, and most importantly, robust and equitable resource sharing that will benefit our students for years to come. A loss of funding will greatly affect these strategic goals and may dismantle the infrastructure necessary to sustain the platform or to continue leveraging those benefits that directly support greater student success.

Prior to launching the statewide LSP, colleges spent a combined \$9 million on 14 disparate, decentralized library systems. LSP's centralized funding model covers subscription costs, vendor support, centralized support, and maintenance of the system as well as an ongoing governance structure to review and recommend policy. This has freed up local funds that were previously budgeted for library platforms to be used for a variety of support methodologies, including, but not limited to: additional database collections to support high-impact certificate programs, the purchase of physical and electronic book collections to increase equitable student access to resources and an increase of library operating hours to allow working students easier access to tutoring and other student support programs.

If ongoing funding is not secured, the project and platform oversight will cease to exist on June 30, 2020, and each college will be forced to contract individually with the LSP vendor. Many colleges will be unable to afford the ongoing subscription and maintenance costs of the platform on their own and may revert to older, antiquated options, losing all of the valuable progress made by the project.

Benefits of a Centralized Model

The statewide LSP project is a strong example of the benefits and value of adopting a systemwide approach and solution for operational and programmatic needs shared throughout the system. The LSP positions all CCC libraries to provide the fullest range of information resources to support instruction across all disciplines and programs. The sophisticated e-resource management, shared bibliographic services, powerful analytics, and seamless discovery interface allow libraries to deliver research materials to students in all programs and in all modalities of instruction while realizing significant reductions in operating costs.

"For the first time in the history of Yuba College, we were able to offer OneSearch to students (which provides an opportunity to search across all databases at once). This is an invaluable service, as it streamlines and simplifies the discovery of our library resources. Also, due to funding

from the state, we were able to purchase additional ebooks to supplement our aging collection,” said Elena Flacks, Librarian at Yuba College. “Finally, the staff component is a lot more intuitive, enabling us to clean up our catalog and obtain valuable reports for Program Review.”

With the statewide platform, library faculty and staff work collaboratively across the community college system to develop instructional tools, best practices, training materials and uniform policies and procedures. And students and faculty studying and teaching at multiple colleges use the same research and information tools no matter where they are. This creates an equitable playing field by allowing students at our smallest colleges to utilize the same state-of-the-art software to access resources as students at our largest colleges.

“This project is more than the wires and the software. It includes an infrastructure that supports connected library work in support of a common goal: student success,” said Doug Achterman, Head Librarian at Gavilan College.

The same centralized LSP is in use by all University of California and California State University campuses. Utilizing a common platform among all California public higher education systems may allow for future partnerships for resource sharing between libraries, providing community college transfer students the best opportunities for continued success.

For more information about the Library Services Platform Project, contact Amy Beadle, Statewide Program Manager, at abeadle@ccctechcenter.org.

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