Cecil County Public Library

Case Study

Cecil County Public Library gets more for its money with SirsiDynix® Cloud.

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>
> — Lee O'Brien
>   *Cecil County Public Library Associate Director*

The breaking point was when the server room, by necessity, began doubling as office space for not four but five library staff. It was 2009, and the Cecil County Public Library had just reached more than one million in circulation for the first time. Excited but a tiny bit overwhelmed, the library directors began to rethink some of their processes.

A SirsiDynix customer since 1998, the Cecil County Public Library started out as "a turnkey library system," associate director Lee O'Brien said. Its operations were pretty basic, with just circulation, cataloguing and outreach functions.

"It was a fairly simple installation originally," O'Brien said. "Then over the years the library just kept growing."

The Cecil County library system, consisting of headquarters at the Elkton Library and six other branch locations, now serves 56,000 patrons. And not only have the library needs changed, but the technology has, too.

Out with the old

O'Brien and Frieda Jack, the library's technical systems and processing manager, had done enough "monkey see, monkey do" maintenance, as she describes it. The server, located at the Elkton Branch, was going on five years of use and, with the higher patron registrations and increased library demands, they couldn't afford to risk the loss of any data.

"That was when we really began to look at our options," O'Brien said. "Aside from maintaining the server, we had concerns about the security of the data. Since 1998, we had never had to do a full restore, and we had never lost data, but we always felt we were a hair's breath away from disaster."

Just to keep the system operational required at least two hours of

work each week, not counting the weekends, holidays or early hours when O'Brien and Jack would take care of required system updates. And in its current state, somebody physically had to touch the library server every day or they would rewrite data. (This would have been a serious headache had the library not upgraded to SirsiDynix® Cloud solution by the time the 56-inch snowstorms of early 2010 hit, putting the library out of connection with its physical server location for days.)

In with the new

Since upgrading to SirsiDynix Cloud, these former headaches, worries and after-hours experiments are no longer a concern for the library branch, which can now focus its saved time and resources on other library needs.

"For libraries in the situation we're in, with a very small IT staff, cloud computing really helps us be effective with our staffing," O'Brien said. "In addition to being responsible for running reports and system admin, our systems manager is also responsible for cataloguing, physical processing and statistical reports, so it's freed up time in her schedule to do other important things for the library."

And plus, O'Brien said, this isn't the '80s anymore. Technology threats are more complex now.

"We've always known that we should have redundant servers and that our data needs to be backed up and protected, but we just haven't had the resources or the expertise. Making that vulnerability go away in this day and age is so important," O'Brien said. "If something were to happen now, we know that we could count on SirsiDynix to take care of it for us. That's something extra we got with Cloud that we didn't have before."

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Global Headquarters
800-288-8020
www.sirsidynix.com