CASE STUDY

*BLUEcloud Visibility:
Creating New Gateways
to Library Resources*

SirsiDynix®

Top photo: Adler Planetarium.

CASE STUDY

Libraries everywhere are excited about the possibilities created by the open web accessibility accomplished through BLUEcloud Visibility.

Open web visibility is a revolutionary leap forward in library accessibility. With this leap understandably comes expectations about what libraries will see from this momentous change. While there may not be a play-by-play to reference for exactly how your library's data will be treated by search engines and the internet as a whole, we do have leading indicators from libraries who are blazing the trail.

SirsiDynix had a number of libraries who adopted BLUEcloud Visibility early on. This case study tells the story of three such

libraries. Pioneering the process of web visibility are three very different SirsiDynix libraries: the Resource Sharing Alliance NFP Consortium, the Engineer Research and Development Center, and Garland County Library. The adoption process for BLUEcloud Visibility has and will continue to change over time, but the experiences of these three libraries can provide an outline for what new BLUEcloud Visibility libraries can expect to see from their adoption.

Resource Sharing Alliance NFP (RSA)

One of the first consortia to adopt BLUEcloud Visibility was RSA. The Resource Sharing Alliance NFP, one of a number of consortia inside the Reaching Across Illinois Library System is a consortium consisting of 143 members of all types, including public libraries, academic libraries, special libraries, and school libraries. These member libraries amount to 191 locations across 14,000 sq miles with collections consisting of approximately 1.1 million titles, 4.5 million items, and a total of 275,000 active users. The many different types of libraries each have unique missions and may serve very distinct demographics, but in spite of their differences the libraries of the RSA consortium are united together by a common desire to share their resources. The RSA consortium serves to tie together the many libraries of the Illinois region and enables each library to better serve its users.

When considering how RSA as a whole could further improve service to end users, the consortium leadership noted that, though their system serves 275,000 active users, the region they encompass has a population of around one million. RSA wanted to find a way to reach this large portion of the population that does not use the library.
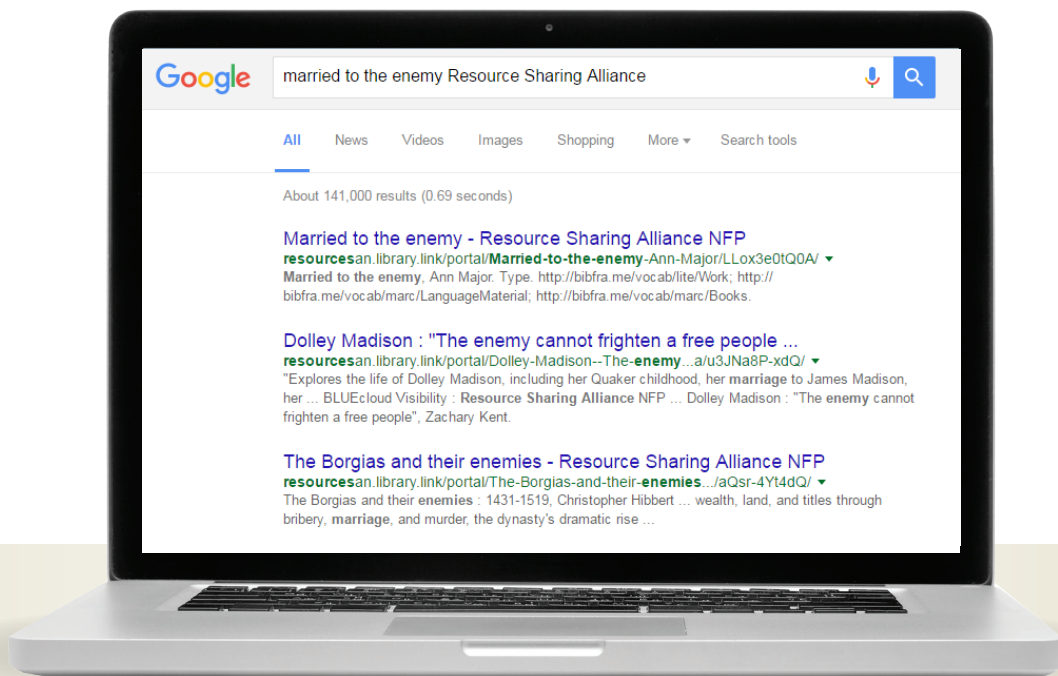
RSA book Google Search results

"There's a large group that could use the library, but haven't thought to go and look," said RSA NFP Executive Director Kendal Orrison. "Our thought process is that we will get our library's catalog data on the Internet, it will begin to appear in search results, and this is a way to bring patrons who are not active patrons to the library. This gives them a little bit more information about what we have in the library, because we have all the new titles, the new movies, and the new CDs. All that stuff is here, so we may as well get the library's holdings out where folks who are not library-users will see it."

Reaching the active user population, Orrison noted, is also of equal importance. "Often library users aren't going directly to catalog whey they're searching for something they're going someplace else. They're probably out googling the newest James Patterson novel looking for an overview of it to see if they want to have it. They would see in the results that their library is in the results and they can know that they can just go check it out."

The Solar System Gallery, in the Sky Pavilion of the Adler Planetarium.

When preparing for the adoption library staff began getting ready. As one of the very first adopters, RSA got to work before to official documentation had even been released. Orrison set up individual authorities for each library in BLUEcloud Central. This initial set up, normally a fairly short set, was long for RSA because they represent nearly 200 libraries.

In spite of their differences, the libraries of the RAILS consortium are united together by a common desire to share their resources.

Adler Planetarium: Futuristic space terminal - by Abel Uribe

RSA went live on BLUEcloud Visibility in February 2016. Initially, the staff began watching search engines every day and did not see any results. By early March, Orrison began receiving phone calls from member libraries who were excited to see their library data popping up on the web. He began searching daily again, repeatedly testing to see if RSA's data was in the system. Because RSA consists of so many libraries and includes a variety of library-types, Orrison found that RSA library results could vary widely, but after much testing he found that he was able to recognize patterns. Orrison found that with popular titles, like *The Martian*, the web was too flooded with content for RSA to rank highly. For titles not caught in a wave of public attention, though, he found RSA results ranking on the first or second page. If he searched both the title and library name, his tests returned excellent results. Time and use should help build success for RSA results. As an early adopter, RSA will have time on their side.

ERDC

In contrast to RSA is another early BLUEcloud Visibility adopter, the United States Army's Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC). The ERDC is "one of the premier engineering and scientific research organizations in the world." Their mission as an organization is to conduct research and development in support of the US Armed Forces and the Nation in order to develop innovative solutions for a safer, better world. ERDC researchers help to solve challenging problems in civil and military engineering, geospatial sciences, water resources, and environmental sciences for the Army, Department of Defense, civilian agencies, and for the public good.

ERDC boasts world-class research facilities and some of the world's fastest and most powerful super computers. The most impressive asset of the ERDC, however, is the staff. ERDC employs an expert staff with more than 1,020 engineers and scientists, many with advanced degrees (32% hold doctorates and 45% hold master's degrees). The expertise and education of its research team allows ERDC to provide solutions to some of the nation's most complex challenges.

An important pillar of ERDC facilities is the ERDC library. The library supports the mission-related research needs of ERDC scientists and engineers. ERDC Library collections and services include 300,000+ items, 28,000+ online journals, 34,000+ online books and reports, online research resources, research consultations, training, outreach services, support for copyright questions, and support for research and administrative initiatives. In addition to the resources the ERDC library offers its researchers, it also hosts an online digital repository of ERDC-authored reports to share the findings of ERDC's world-class researchers. A desire to share the wealth of information within this online repository is what led the ERDC library to implement BLUEcloud Visibility.

The ERDC Library Science and Knowledge Management Branch wanted to increase the visibility of ERDC's published knowledge. Prior to the implementation of BLUEcloud Visibility, the ERDC library was receiving an average of 3,500 sessions per month. Explaining the library's approach to visibility, System Librarian Molly McManus wrote, "ensuring that ERDC authored

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[BLUEcloud Visibility] can translate into more relevant search results for users and more users viewing and citing ERDC authored reports, journal articles and other publications."

Molly McManus
System Librarian

ERDC CHL's Soils Lab by Oscar Reihsmann

reports and articles are visible in search engines like Google, Yahoo and Bing is an important part of completing the publishing process. Search engines are where many researchers are beginning their research and finding experts on important topics... [BLUEcloud Visibility] can translate into more relevant search results for users and more users viewing and citing ERDC authored reports, journal articles and other publications."

The library implemented BLUEcloud Visibility in October of 2015. Following implementation the number of sessions per month steadily increased. In February 2016 the ERDC library catalog and repository had its largest number of sessions per month with 5,068, a 44% increase over their former average. Reflecting on the success of these

numbers, McManus noted ERDC's satisfaction with the progress and goals for the future, "Our first goal with [BLUEcloud Visibility] was to increase visibility measured by the number of sessions each month. We are seeing great results in the first 5 months and will continue to monitor the statistics. The second goal with the BIBFRAME project is to take our Linked Data and find ways to connect our data to other government and scientific data."

ERDC has been pleased with the progress of their web presence following their initial implementation of BLUEcloud Visibility. Already the staff has developed new goals for the future and are looking for ways to make their resources even more accessible, relevant, and connected.

Garland

The final BLUEcloud Visibility early adopter, Garland County Library (GCL), is very different from RSA and ERDC GCL is a stand-alone library serving the entire county of Garland, a community of just 98,000. Located in the heart of Arkansas, the Garland community has had an operating library since 1833, and GCL now proudly stands as the oldest library systems in the Arkansas community.

Recently, GCL created a new mission statement reflecting a desire to serve as a central hub for the network of the community. The formal mission statement reads: "The Garland County Library enriches our community by creating and providing essential, meaningful connections—to traditional library materials, to digital resources, and to each other through cultural, educational, and recreational opportunities."

> *"I understood that this was a bet on the future rather than something [overnight]"*
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> **-** Adam Webb
> Assistant Director
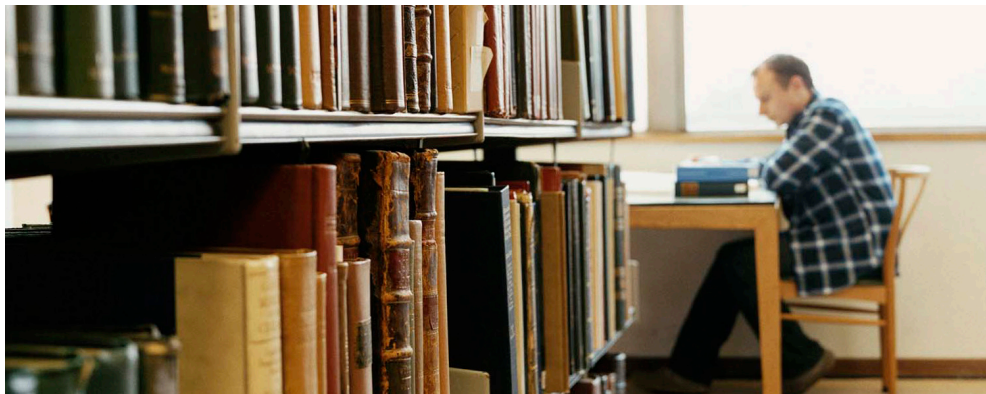
In an effort to advance this mission, GCL looked for ways to connect to their community. "We realized, like a lot of libraries, that people weren't searching us first," said Assistant Director Adam Webb. "We were wondering about ways to get people to start looking at us again."

At COSUGI 2015, Webb learned about BLUEcloud Visibility and realized that it would help provide a solution to GCL's disconnect to their community. The Garland Director and board both liked the idea and GCL moved forward with their adoption.

Garland County Library adopted BLUEcloud Visibility in February of 2016. As a small, stand-alone library, they found that they did not immediately see results. When asked if this delay made GCL nervous, Webb affirmed that they did not. "I read quite a bit about this," he went on to explain. "I knew what BIBFRAME does and how it works. I understood that this was a bet on the future rather than something that overnight is going to increase circulation and increase the number of people coming to the catalog."

"Right now we still don't wind up on the front pages of Google," says Webb, "but we've seen some people starting to find our resources through Visibility on their own." How do they know BLUEcloud Visibility is starting to work?

Google Analytics is one indicator. So far Google Analytics is showing that 5% of traffic to GCL's Enterprise is routed through the Library.Link network with a total of 1,800 new users to the catalog—a substantial gain for a community of 98,000. Webb also reports that GCL has received phones calls and from individuals who say "I searched this book. I didn't know the library had this." While some of these callers may be searching the library's catalog, as usual, Webb noted that some of these callers do not have library cards. To Webb this indicates that these individuals were searching online and BLUEcloud Visibility is helping to bring awareness to a community of individuals who have not previously used the library.

Looking to the Future

Looking at present titles search results, GCL does not yet hold the first page of Google without including the library name or acronym. Webb expressed the hope that, though GCL is a small library, the geolocation and Library.Link network will place their library on the front pages of Google for simple title searches. Webb anticipates that eventually the critical mass of the entire Library.Link network will catapult GCL and help bring even more users to their library.

ERDC and RSA share similar goals of hoping to make their resources increasingly visible. RSA wants to make the library ubiquitous for its patrons.

Orrison expressed a hope that Linked Data will evolve to create more powerful levels of interconnectivity and return more sophisticated search results.

The experiences of RSA, ERDC, and Garland have paved the way for libraries who will also use BLUEcloud Visibility. These early adopters have laid the foundation of the libraries' entry into Linked Data, building relevance for others in the network and those yet to join. Some of the challenges and time-frames experienced by the early adopting libraries can serve as roadmap for later-adopting libraries, letting them to know what to expect and when.

SirsiDynix would like to express our gratitude to Garland, ERDC, and the RSA consortium for their willingness to participate in this case study. We appreciate the insight offered by your experiences.

Get in touch!

Would you be open to speaking with someone at SirsiDynix to learn more about BLUEcloud Visibility? Contact us today!

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