

University of Reading

Case Study

The University of Reading combines museum objects, special collections archives and library resources through the SirsiDynix Enterprise® discovery interface.

“Our special collections archives include 140 collections of varying emphases... These collections are of national and international significance, and Enterprise gives us a way of promoting these materials.”

— Ruth Salisbury
*University of Reading
Library Systems Manager*

As one of the leading academic institutions in the United Kingdom, the University of Reading combines research, world-class teaching and enterprise for its 17,000-student population. The University offers courses and research in the specialist areas of agriculture, construction management, horticulture, cybernetics, meteorology, real estate and typography, where there are few other national providers. Supporting this mission are the University Library, the Special Collections Service and the Museum of English Rural Life. But until recently, access to the full spectrum of information resources of these three entities required the use of separate systems. Books and e-resources were accessed via the library catalogue, while the special collections, archives and museum objects were maintained in a separate system.

“Two separate systems is a major problem,” said Ruth Salisbury, University of Reading library systems manager. “We wanted a single interface that would search across all the collections, to provide an enhanced collection for our users.”

The University Library, the Special Collections Service and the Museum of English Rural Life use the SirsiDynix Symphony® integrated library system for the management of print books and electronic collections. However, the 20,000 museum objects and 200,000 special collections archives could only be accessed through the Museum and Special Collections Service specialist system for archives and museum objects. In summary, no single system showcased the complete collection of any department.

The University needed a solution for all three. It found it in the SirsiDynix Enterprise® discovery platform.

A unified tool for users

Recognizing the need for a unified interface, the university library – working with the museum and special collections team – set out to build the discovery solution. SirsiDynix staff from the United Kingdom and North American offices also worked closely with staff from the university to ensure success.



“We decided to go with SirsiDynix Enterprise for the project,” Salisbury said. “We liked the SirsiDynix interface mainly because it is quite flexible, allowing us to draw in material from various sources.”

The automatic harvesting of data from Symphony made Enterprise an easy choice. Salisbury explained that, while they also looked at other vendor solutions for incorporating e-journal content, the other solutions considered “would have been far less flexible” for showing museum objects, archives and books.

“From our perspective, and our students’ perspective certainly, the idea of the one-stop-shop is great,” Salisbury said. “The Google-like search for academic content that is controlled and managed will be wonderful.”

The project was split into phases, commencing with the data specification and load from Symphony, followed by the museum objects and archive data from the separate Adlib system. Consideration was given to each source of data in turn, ensuring the best possible experience for the reader.

“We’re actually bringing in the objects and archives data from Adlib into Enterprise,” Salisbury said. “We have other museum collections, an institutional repository and materials from other university collections that we may pull in later as well.”

Combined yet distinct

The University of Reading’s aim with the project is to have one interface that will search everything, but also to permit pre-qualified searches to focus on particular collections for different audiences. Salisbury said SirsiDynix Enterprise is incorporating all of this. SirsiDynix Enterprise permits the reader to search the library collection, the special collections, the museum collections or all three simultaneously. Users can search all the collections through the library catalog interface, or separately access just one unit’s collections as it suits their needs. Facets can also be used to interactively narrow the results to those held by a single unit.

“We have four profiles set up all together,” Salisbury said. “The profiles each have their own identity and branding. The museum has a link from the museum website that will only search the museum collections. The pre-qualified search selects museum objects, books and archives belonging specifically to the museum. This profile is branded using the museum colors and logo, but with the unified system in the background. There are similar profiles for the Library and the Special Collections Service.”

Salisbury said the university is proud to provide its community a unified discovery service, born from this groundbreaking project, pulling in data from multiple non-Symphony sources for a better, richer user experience. With Enterprise, data for the 700,000+ records in Symphony is harvested daily through an automated process, while Salisbury manages the uploaded data from Adlib.

“Managing our resources in this way means we can consolidate all of our collections into a single federated index in Enterprise, whilst still using the specialist features of Adlib to manage archives and museum objects,” Salisbury said. “This makes for an enhanced experience for our users and allows the university to showcase its collections far more effectively. The user won’t know what’s being pulled from Adlib versus

ONE INTERFACE TO SEARCH THEM ALL

The Project: Bring the full resources from three university entities and two separate systems into a single, unified discovery interface.

The Sources: The University Library, Special Collections Service and the Museum of English Rural Life.

The Data Types: MARC and non-MARC records from the Symphony ILS and Adlib archive management system, with records representing archives, rare books, e-resources, museum objects and more.

The Numbers: 700,000 library records; 20,000 objects; 200,000 archives.

The Solution: A unified SirsiDynix Enterprise discovery interface spanning all collections.

Symphony; they will just see results that are relevant to their search.”

How it works

Now with its SirsiDynix Enterprise discovery system, the University of Reading will be able to display institution-spanning collections via the SirsiDynix Enterprise interface. Library physical and e-resources will show up in their respective formats; meanwhile special collections archives and museum objects will display side-by-side within the catalog interface pulling through images of the objects to display with the record. If a student researcher is looking for historical information on agriculture – one of the university’s specialty subjects – the student will be able to view full library resources, archival material and relevant museum pieces that relate. An image of a plough, for example, the physical object of which is housed in the Museum of English Rural Life, will display in the catalog with full record information relevant to the user’s search of interest. Icons for different material types will alert the user that the plough they are looking at is an object in the museum.

“Our special collections archives include 140 collections of varying emphases,” Salisbury said. “We have the Beckett Collection, the Archive of British Publishing and many others. These collections are of national and international significance, and Enterprise gives us a way of promoting these materials.”

Additionally, Salisbury said the institution benefits from utilizing Enterprise as a cloud solution, eliminating the need to maintain the server or manage software upgrades.

As the project director, Salisbury coordinated with an implementation team across the library and the museum. The comprehensive approach combined with the Enterprise solution’s flexibility has enabled each party to get what they need, while providing the best experience for the end users. Salisbury has worked alongside the museum staff and archivist to ensure that each party has the fields they designate displayed for each respective collection. The result is the ability for separate, branded search from each organization’s website, or a combined collection of museum object, books and archives all appearing together in a single list.

“The SirsiDynix staff have been very helpful and have put a lot of time and effort into helping us make it the system we want,” Salisbury said.



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