



# Utah State University and the Robotic Library

Case Study

"It's essential that our ILS integrates with this robotic system, and Symphony™ does that better than any other solution we've seen."

— Todd Hugie

*Utah State University Library  
Systems Manager*

A science- and tech-heavy institution enveloped by mountains on every side, Utah State University is a Mecca for engineers and many other aspiring scholars. With such a specialty, it's only appropriate that the USU library would reflect its setting. The university's robot-equipped Merrill-Cazier Library does just that.

The Merrill-Cazier Library, run on the SirsiDynix Symphony® platform, is just the right mix of world-class technology and local familiarity. Home to approximately 1.5 million books and materials, the library serves more than 23,000 students and professors. The library is also home to what has come to be affectionately called "the Barn."

The BARN (actually an acronym for Borrowers Automated Retrieval Network), was established in 2006 in response to a reconstruction of the Merrill-Cazier Library, which consolidated the library facility from two buildings (totaling 318,000 sq. ft.) to one newly renovated library building (at 305,000 sq. ft.). Despite the slightly reduced total space, several technological innovations make the new library much more functional. SirsiDynix e-Library, part of Symphony, played a significant role in making that possible.

To make the most of the library's space while still carefully preserving the periodicals, older books and special collections materials housed within the BARN's special climate-control confines, the BARN utilizes robotic assistants to organize and retrieve materials requested by patrons. Staffed by robots and managed via SirsiDynix technology, the five-story BARN allows the library to organize and store in a small area what would take up significantly more space using traditional shelving.

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and Symphony does that better than any other solution we've seen," said Todd Hugie, USU library systems manager.

Using e-Library, a student or professor can locate and reserve materials either onsite or online, at any time of day. Then, with the help of a SirsiDynix custom-created program and the highly interoperable Symphony platform, the robots are alerted of the request and immediately begin to locate and retrieve the desired material.

"A student can be in China at two in the morning, and they can get onto e-Library and control it," Hugie said. "As soon as they hit 'request,' they can see the robot start moving to retrieve their material."

Enabled by the powerful functionality and interoperability of Symphony, USU's robotic solution not only provides a unique show for patrons (who can watch the robots retrieve their books through the glass display windows on various floors throughout the library), but provides an economical long-term solution for managing these special materials efficiently in a finite space.

As one of only a few university libraries in the country to utilize robotic technology, Hugie has watched the process carefully and proudly claims that the SirsiDynix solution works with the robots more seamlessly than any other he's heard of. And for a library that runs on robots, this interoperability SirsiDynix Symphony provides is mandatory.



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Global Headquarters

800-288-8020

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