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Vivisimo Customer Case Study

Vivisimo

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BACKGROUND
Capitalizing on the power of the Internet, the Houston Academy of Medicine-Texas Medical Center (HAM-TMC) Library is using search to reinvent itself in this digital age. By using the Vivisimo Velocity Search Platform to search its multiple repositories, the library has helped users find information they never knew existed as well as positioned the library as a thought leader in its community.

SITUATION ANALYSIS
The Internet revolution has dramatically changed the way that all organizations operate. But perhaps no group has been more affected by this change than libraries. Today most library customers will not physically walk into a building to get the information they require when they can simply point and click from a computer.

Remaining relevant in the Internet age was one of the challenges facing the Houston Academy of Medicine-Texas Medical Center Library. Instead of backing away from its mission to provide critical medical information to its users, the library staff chose to take the challenge head on and use the power of the Internet to its advantage.

The HAM-TMC library serves a diverse set of users, including faculty, students and researchers interested in medical topics ranging from pharmacy to optometry to nursing. Because of that complexity, searching through the library's more than 180 databases often produced little more than an alphabetized list of results—only some of which are relevant to the user's query.

The HAM-TMC library’s dilemma was exacerbated by two additional factors: the growing number of unique information repositories coming online and an increase in interdisciplinary research.

“Our real problem in this library is that we have too many resources, and we have too many users with different needs,” said Leah Krevit, the library’s associate director. “We finally realized that instead of treating the Internet as a threat, we could use it to help accomplish our mission.”

“We have a ton of resources to make available to this wide array of users—and we were failing miserably at it, because all we do is make big lists
“Before we implemented Velocity, there’s just no way a person was going to go out to the various resources and do a search on each of them—even if they physically could do it. Now with Velocity, we’re helping them to uncover a hidden gem of information—showing them something that they never knew that we had.”

Michael Garrett
HAM-TMC Library Technology Coordinator

Library leaders were also impressed with Vivisimo’s QuickStart Tutorial, which demonstrates Velocity’s ease of implementation and configuration as well as gives users a preview of Vivisimo’s technical support communication.

“I did a brief demonstration of Velocity to our executive board of directors,” Krevit said. “The board is comprised of top-level executives from the medical school, the hospital—people who have a vested interest in the library and are helping to direct it. And they were very excited! They really saw the potential.”

TYING IT TOGETHER: VIVISIMO VELOCITY SEARCH PLATFORM

The Houston Academy of Medicine-Texas Medical Library chose a phased implementation approach, having Velocity federate a few of the most used databases at first. Because not all data sources can be indexed directly, federation enables users to have a single view of all content by tapping into the native search inherent in these systems and bringing them together to deliver one coherent view of all results.

The results from all of those databases are presented to the user in a single set, regardless of repository. Velocity also organizes the results into topical categories, or clusters, to give users additional insight into their results.
Search by clusters (1) to get an overview of results by topics. Results (2) are presented in a format familiar to users. Uncover (3) a hidden gem of information located in the various databases that users may never knew existed, thanks to Velocity's implementation.
“There is so much discovery in just clustering alone that is impossible to get through a simple search,” Garrett said. “We want people to wrap their brains around what this technology does.”

Given the amount of health sciences education that is image-oriented, the library is also considering going beyond written documents and adding an image search.

The library was impressed with Vivisimo’s technical support team and the company’s willingness to act as a partner, not just a vendor. That quality is particularly rare when dealing with libraries, which often have antagonistic relationships with their IT vendors.

“Our experience with Vivisimo has been that we are both in the same boat and we’re both rowing in the same direction,” Krevit said. “And I think that Vivisimo is even rowing harder than we are, which is great. I really think that that partnership aspect is really, really important—and I think that shows what kind of company Vivisimo is.”

RETURN ON INVESTMENT
The Velocity implementation is a win-win situation for the Houston Academy of Medicine-Texas Medical Center Library as well as its customers. The library has found a way to better meet users’ needs by giving them access to information they never realized existed.

“Before we implemented Velocity, there’s just no way a person was going to go out to the various resources and do a search on each of them—even if they physically could do it,” Garrett said. “Now with Velocity, we’re helping them to uncover a hidden gem of information—showing them something that they never knew that we had.”

In turn, the library is benefiting by remaining relevant in a digital world by leveraging the significant investments it has made in its various databases.

“It’s amazing to think how many databases we license every year that people never even locate,” Garrett said. “Someone will keep doing searches on a particular subject, and this index is bringing back a result from a particular database. And all the sudden the searcher realizes that this database is just what he’s looking for. He realizes that this database that we license—that we probably pay a lot of money for—is something that he can really use.”

The Velocity implementation is also helping the Houston Academy of Medicine-Texas Medical Center Library establish itself as a leader by tackling some tough problems facing the library community.

“Millions of dollars are being spent generating local data and nobody knows what to do with it,” Krevit said. “After the articles are published, the clinical trials are done, here’s all this data—what in the world is going to happen to it? Where will this lead us as an organization? We’re definitely going to be able to raise people’s awareness about what the problems are. And through Velocity’s search we’ve found a good solution for at least one set of these problems.”