Using the Cloud to Power Library Sites &

Hosted services made it possible for this library to offer enhanced services that patrons want to use.

In 2010, Vancouver Public Library introduced a Strategic Plan focusing on four areas: Social Inclusion and Innovation, Environmental Responsibility, Lifelong Learning, and A Strong Organization. One of the key goals that emerged from the Strategic Plan was to enhance library online services.

Because the Library wanted a high level of expertise when engaging with our patrons online, we turned to cloud-based services to enhance our library catalogue and improve our online research guides. Various working groups were held to develop feature requirements, evaluate products, and develop content creation guidelines for staff that would be using these new tools. Eventually, the library selected Bibliocommons as its catalogue discovery layer, and chose LibGuides to power its research guides.

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Bibliocommons - vpl.bibliocommons.com

Bibliocommons is an integrated discovery layer that enhances our existing library catalogue. Bibliocommons adds user reviews, comments and ratings to library items, as well as allowing users to create and share lists. It has been well-received by patrons and has reduced the need to provide training and support documentation for the library catalogue.

Launching Bibliocommons was a team effort, and involved library staff from the Cataloguing, Systems, and Online Information & News departments:

- OIN staff conducted user tests with library staff to help us hone in on areas that required additional emphasis in staff training sessions.
- Cataloging worked closely with Bibliocommons so that our catalogue data mapped and displayed properly.
- The Systems department was the point of contact for technical support, and worked closely with the developer team to discover and fix any issues.

The deployment proved to be a challenging and lengthy project, and took six months to achieve sign off. Refinements and outstanding issues continue, more than six months past official launch. The project was marred by communication between the three divisions and an unclear timeline.

LibGuides - guides.vpl.ca

LibGuides is a content management system that is primarily used to produce research guides. These guides act as gateways to the Library’s vast collections, but we have also used them to produce how-to guides for Bibliocommons and our ebook and audiobook collections.

LibGuides made it easy for us to add simple interactivity and multimedia to our research guides, functionality that was difficult to deploy using our website CMS. Staff can easily repurpose content from other research guides in the creation of their own publications. It has drastically reduced the amount of time library staff spend on developing research guides, and its built-in statistics makes it easy for the website manager to keep track of content performance.

The project was spearheaded by the web team of the Online Information & News division. The web services librarian, in conjunction with library staff from across the organization, developed a series of layout and content guidelines that would be used to ensure a unified look and feel across all research guides.

From start to finish, the LibGuides project was quick and easy, and was implemented over a period of only four months. We were able to complete the project with only a minimum Systems department involvement, which freed them to devote resources to other, more complicated and resource-intensive projects.

Why Hosted?

Running a large-scale website can be a challenge. Building a best of class web-based product that rivals commercial offerings can be difficult for public libraries to achieve, especially as we face budget cutbacks and staffing shortages. We lacked the in-house resources to build the kinds of websites with the polished look and feel many of our patrons were used to, so we turned to hosted products to help the Library fill that gap.

By choosing third-party cloud hosted products, we were able to pull more control of online products into our Public Service team instead of our Systems department. Third party hosted solutions make it possible for us to deploy enhanced products to our patrons without these risks.

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by the numbers

92,861
registered bibliocommons users

3,224
comments on catalogue items

78,277
guide pageviews since LibGuides launch