Taking the Pain Out of Information Retrieval: One Organization's Quest for a Unified Search Experience

For many corporate libraries, "search" represents an enormous challenge. Depending how users access the library, finding what they need can require a search of multiple databases using the same terms. This can turn out to be an effort fraught with frustration and a time drain on productivity.

When the director of information and knowledge management at a global specialty biopharmaceutical company experienced this frustration first hand, while searching through eight databases for competitive intelligence materials on a tight deadline, she decided this limitation was unacceptable. The library would embark on a mission to become more user-friendly.

The goal? The ability to search across multiple resources for a specific keyword or phrase and retrieve one comprehensive set of results.

Here's a look at their journey.

THE "WHERE'S MY STUFF?" CONUNDRUM

When this mission began, the company licensed more than 80 different content sources, ranging from journal articles and clinical trials data, to competitive intelligence databases and marketing reports. Each content source was listed on the company's Intranet and could be searched individually, but they were not accessible to search as a group. In other words, a user searching for all available information on a particular drug — a chemical structure, market intelligence, clinical trials, or journal articles — had to search each individual content source separately to piece together the information required.

This onerous search experience was not only time consuming, but workplace data suggests there are costs associated with the inability to locate content in an organized fashion.

Industry research points to an increased return on investment (ROI) of at least 38% when there is improved access to information.[1] Some data also suggests the amount of time knowledge workers spend searching for information has increased more than 10% over the past decade.[2]

Bolstered by her own frustration, the library director organized focus groups with more than 100 library users from various parts of the company. User after user reported being unable to find the information they needed in any systematic manner and complained there must be a better way.

> "We knew that much of the content included in our users' search was from scientific journals, which are managed by CCC's RightFind content workflow solution. We also recognized Ixxus had been very successful in delivering search and discovery capabilities in a variety of industries. It seemed a good place to start exploring possible solutions to the search issues."

[1] http://www.ejitime.com/materials/IDC%20 on%20The%20High%20Cost%20Of%20Not%20 Finding%20Information.pdf

[2] https://www.cottrillresearch.com/various-survey-statistics-workers-spend-too-much-time-searching-for-information/

The library director was then able to procure support from executive stakeholders to scope out possible solutions to the problem, aptly dubbed "Where's My Stuff?"

INSIDE THE DISCOVERY PROCESS

The library director reached out to Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) and its affiliate, Ixxus, to learn more about options for more efficient searching.

"We knew that much of the content included in our users' search was from scientific journals, which are managed by CCC's RightFind® content workflow solution. We also recognized Ixxus had been very successful in delivering search and discovery capabilities in a variety of industries. It seemed a good place to start exploring possible solutions to the search issues."

Following a series of discussions with the CCC and Ixxus teams, the library opted for a two-pronged solution. The first would transition library resources from the company Intranet to a dedicated library portal page that included an automated help desk, allowing users to directly submit requests to library staff. The second solution was the implementation of enterprise search capabilities that would allow users to search many preselected databases and content sources simultaneously and retrieve one set of results.

It was important to the library team to obtain as much information as possible regarding potential users, such as:
- How users search for content
- What types of content they search
- How they want to view their results

Through multiple days of discovery, the library and the CCC and Ixxus teams together interviewed users, searched content, developed personas and use cases, and developed a series of requirements for both the library portal and the unified search components. In the end, it was determined that the library would move forward with a unified search that included nine distinct data sources — representing 120 million records — and that the number of searchable databases would increase over time.

POSITIVE INITIAL REACTIONS & NEXT STEPS

Following rigorous rounds of user and staff testing during the development phase, the library portal and enterprise search solutions were released to the company six months apart. This offered users the opportunity to become familiar with the new portal capabilities, explore all the content options, and engage the library staff in useful conversations that would inform the parallel development of the enterprise search component.

The initial release of the enterprise search component included search across CCC's RightFind content workflow solution, two news sources, a clinical trials database, and several competitive intelligence databases. The number of searchable databases was expected to double over the subsequent six months.

This project required a dedicated time commitment from the library staff over the course of a year, and initial feedback from the organization suggests the commitment was worthwhile. Researchers using the enterprise search functionality have noted time savings and a greater depth in search results.

"The enterprise search feature performs much like we envisioned — it has markedly reduced the amount of time we spend searching across multiple databases for a single nugget of information, while generating a well-organized and robust set of results," a senior-level information specialist said.

Copyright Clearance Center | www.copyright.com | www.ixxus.com

Copyright Clearance Center

Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) builds unique solutions that connect content and rights in contextually relevant ways through software and professional services. CCC helps people navigate vast amounts of data to discover actionable insights, enabling people to innovate and make informed decisions. CCC, with its subsidiaries RightsDirect and Ixxus, collaborates with customers to advance how data and information is integrated, accessed, and shared while setting the standard for effective copyright solutions that accelerate knowledge and power innovation. CCC is headquartered in Danvers, Massachusetts, with offices across North America, Europe and Asia.

Ixxus

Ixxus are data systems integration and knowledge engineering experts. Ixxus solutions are trusted by business leaders at the world's leading corporations to accelerate their most challenging digital transformation initiatives.

LEARN MORE

For U.S. inquiries:

@ info@copyright.com

📞 +1.978.750.8400 (option 3)

For inquiries outside the U.S.:

@ info@ixxuscom

📞 +44 (0)20.7033.2333