

# Ascend Learning Case Study



Ascend Learning ("Ascend") is a world-leading education technology company serving healthcare and other high-growth career industries. With rigorously researched assessments, continuous analytical benchmarking and broad and unique range of learning tools, they provide customized education across all sectors.

Ascend Learning comprises eight companies that are located throughout the USA: **Jones & Bartlett Learning, ATI Nursing Education, Premier Global, National Healthcare Association, NASM, Advanced Informatics (AI), ClickSafety, ExamFX, ATI Allied Health** and **MedHub**.

## Challenge

With so much educational content and data held in a variety of content stores and learning management systems across multiple companies, Ascend was seeking a new unified strategy for content creation, management and dissemination which would allow them to invest in new product initiatives and enhancement.

As well as holding content across multiple siloed systems, Ascend were facing further problems in that some was still being held within disconnected storage, and still more sat with external third-party suppliers and outside of central control.

With end-of-life technology and a lack of process definition also in the mix, the company's existing systems and processes did not fit with their vision of themselves as a forward-thinking, innovative learning solutions provider.

## Solution

### Technologies used:

- **Alfresco**
- **MarkLogic**
- **Digital Media Annatator**
- **HTMLBook**

- **XSLT**

CCC was invited to design, build and deliver a content management solution and strategy that would maximize content potential by enabling the discovery and reuse of content assets across all Ascend companies.

To ensure the resulting solution would align with production staff's work on a day-to-day basis, as well as supporting Ascend's overall business objectives, a deep-dive Discovery phase was conducted in order to develop an in-depth understanding of each division and their position within the content ecosystem.

This insight was leveraged to craft a multi-year strategic roadmap for CMS delivery and gradual roll-out across the entirety of the group, commencing with **Jones & Bartlett Learning (JBL)** as the starting division.

The solution was built using [Alfresco ECM](#) integrated with a [MarkLogic](#) repository, allowing content to be stored and searched in a granular XML format.

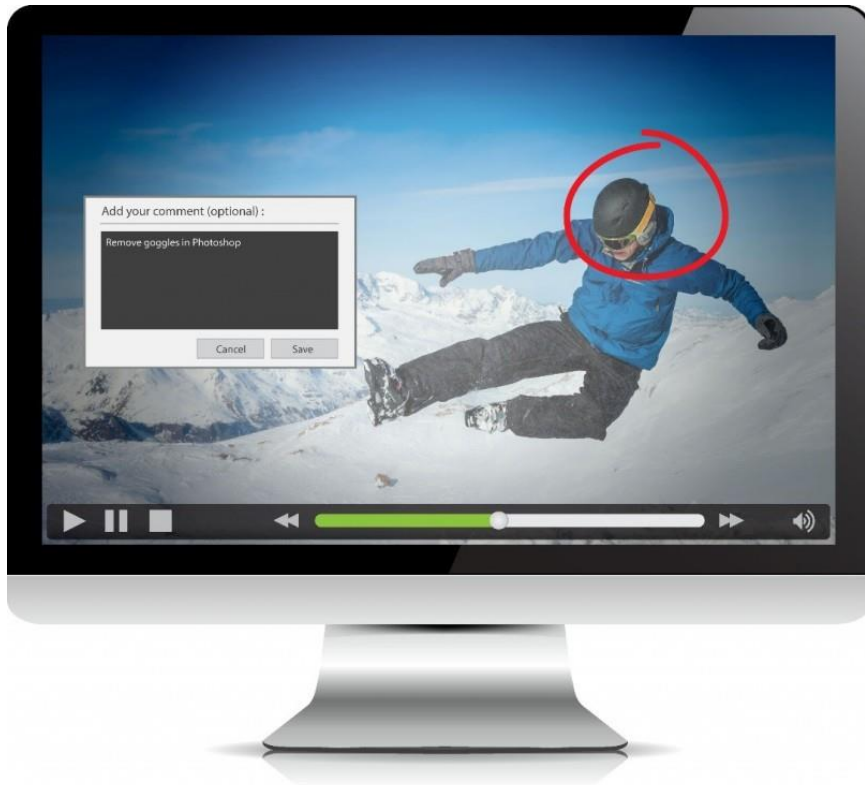
CCC developed highly customisable and user-intuitive "deep search" functionality, which allows users to search across the repository by words, phrase, discipline, sub-discipline, location or ISBN. Users can also filter search results by subsections of a book (e.g. chapter heading, art, back blurb, table, sidebar, etc), allowing them to search for a specific term within a specific place.

The screenshot shows a search interface titled "Full Text Search". It includes several input fields for search criteria: "All Words", "Exact Phrase" (with "advanced nursing" entered), "Any Words", and "Exclude Words" (with "theory" entered). Below these are fields for "ISBN", "Discipline", "Sub-discipline", and a "Book Section" dropdown menu set to "Chapter Headings". A "Reset" button and a "Search" button are located at the bottom right. The interface is part of the Ascend Learning system, as indicated by the logo in the top left and the "Back to Alfresco" link in the top right.

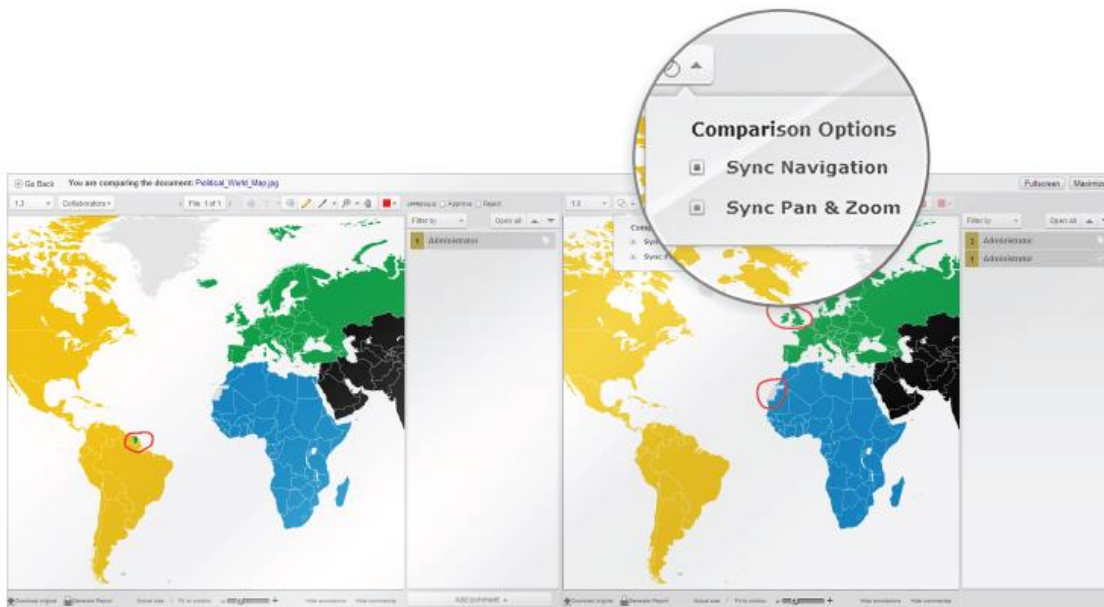
This 'google-like' search has a responsive UX, meaning that searches can be carried out from any device, allowing for mobile working. This gives users fast access to any particular piece of content they are looking for, however they are looking for it – enabling powerful content discovery and opening up the potential for reuse and recombination of existing assets into new product.

An initial 1100 books were uploaded into the CMS in XML format; this will grow rapidly as the solution rolls out across all other Ascend companies.

The [Digital Media Annotator](#) was also integrated into the solution to provide users with a powerful tool to collaborate on design. Production teams can review, annotate and workflow media assets (including video, documents and PDF) with each other in real-time across multiple locations.



'Diffing' tools were also integrated so that changes can be tracked over time and multiple versions of an image, page or publication can be compared. This streamlines and facilitates work-in-progress, as well as enabling comparison of different product editions.



## Results

The six-week intensive Discovery process was followed by two project phases of seven weeks each, providing JBL with iterative delivery of the full solution.

As the culmination of seven years' attempt to renew ailing content systems and processes, Ascend chose CCC to guarantee speed and certainty; both of which were demonstrated in this project.

The project has now moved into support phase across the application, providing support for Alfresco, MarkLogic and the Publishing Modules in one "single solution" service.

"CCC provided us with a flawless implementation," said **Melissa Doherty, Technology Project Manager** at Ascend, "We're looking forward to seeing the other business units realise the benefits of the platform as it rolls out across the rest of the company."

**Date Published: 07th of August 2015**