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Basic Content Services
FOR EDUCATION

CASE STUDY

LOYOLA MARYMOUNT

Founded in 1911, Loyola Marymount University (LMU) attracts undergraduate and graduate students seeking an ethnically diverse university dedicated to the highest academic standards and a faith-inspired concern for justice.

A First Generation Portal

With outreach from China to South America, and with both research and recruitment actively underway for both faculty and students, collaboration and communication are critical to the University's success. To facilitate collaboration for students and faculty with their colleagues on campus and throughout the world, LMU opted to implement an enterprise portal. In the Spring 2004, LMU selected Luminis™ and the portal project officially kicked off in October 2004.

The portal was expected to allow the University to push information throughout the organization to individuals and groups - providing targeted communications. The first generation of the portal, however, was not successful. Users found it clumsy, cluttered, and challenging to use.

Addressing LMU's Goals

Solving the internal communications challenges was one major University goal, but there were other key efforts underway. In order to participate in research and sponsored projects, Loyola faculty needed to collaborate. The CIO and Vice President of Information Technology, Erin Griffin, needed to identify and implement services that would support LMU's transition to a more research-focused university – and would facilitate communication. "Prior to Luminis, LMU had no portal. People depended on email to communicate. As a result, there was no differentiated approach to communications," Griffin commented. Emailing files back and forth was difficult and frustrating, and the kind of data that needed to be shared was often too large to be passed back and forth in email attachments. To facilitate collaboration on a global basis, staff needed to rely on web services and web-enabled applications. In addition, LMU was providing online education (eLearning, distance learning) which, in turn, created its own requirement for worldwide collaboration for faculty and students.

LMU|LA
Loyola Marymount University

Key Facts

Industry: Higher Education

Product: Xythos Digital Locker

Audience: Faculty, Staff & Students

Why Xythos?

- Intuitive Interface

- Ability to Integrate with Luminis

- Positive Feedback from Pilot Program

- Single Sign-on with Portal

- Access from Multiple Platforms

Benefits

- Facilitate Secure Research and Collaboration

- Eliminates Email Attachments

- Widespread Adoption by Faculty, Staff and Students

As CIO, Griffin's goals were to: **1)** Enhance collaboration between LMU's faculty and colleagues within and outside of the University, **2)** Improve information security by reducing the risks of network file sharing (and the potential security risks that VPN access can cause) and **3)** Enhance LMU's transition to a Service Oriented Architecture. To that list Griffin then added: **4)** Improve the usefulness of the Luminis portal.

After a few false starts, a decision was made to re-launch the portal. Griffin wanted to add a technology that would be interesting and compelling - and would draw people to the portal. She had seen presentations regarding the Digital Locker from Xythos and discussed its use with some of her peers. To the IT team, Digital Locker looked like a tool that offered value – and would enable faculty to have access to files on or off campus. The Digital Locker could become the service that turned the portal into a two-way web communications channel for the university.

Rethinking the Portal Strategy

Over the course of several months, the portal was redesigned. Griffin's team directed a complete visual and organizational re-design of Luminis, adding additional single sign-on capabilities, streamlining the amount and location of the content, and simplifying function. The portal, branded ManeGate, soon had tabs for different constituents – and several buttons on the home page (for calendar, email and Xythos.)

The architecture chosen consisted of HP Blade Servers running Red Hat Enterprise Server 4.1, application servers that would be load balanced behind an F5 Networks BigIP, an Oracle database, an integrated Active Directory, using the NetApp 3050 SAN.

A pilot with almost 100 beta testers was initiated in the summer, 2006. Formative evaluations took place, as well as a summative survey at the end. End user training materials – including a quick start guide – were developed, and a marketing campaign created. The new service was introduced to faculty in late August and formally introduced to all first year students in September, 2006. There were nearly 1,000 unique users before LMU formally launched its campus-wide campaign. "We wanted the system we deployed to be intuitive, easy to use and compatible with any client operating system. We also wanted a non-proprietary name for the Xythos system and chose LionShare. The team integrated the Luminis portal with LionShare and went live. The use of Xythos was so compelling that it re-awakened enthusiasm for the portal," Griffin recalled.

A Secure Web-Based Solution

The combination of security and web access were important to LMU, as was the ability for external collaborators to have access to LMU files. Besides faculty, LMU's legal and facilities staff also shared enormous files. "Our mail system does not support huge documents as attachments due to the overhead they create. Our administrative staff members are now exchanging files using secure links, instead of emailing file attachments. We like the security of knowing that confidential files are not being transported back and forth," Griffin observed.

As a result of the Xythos integration with Luminis, Loyola Marymount faculty can also now travel or be on sabbaticals and still access their files. Since Loyola faculty spend nearly 40% of their time in collaboration with faculty outside of the institution, co-authoring books, and communicating with other researchers or

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colleagues working in the same discipline, the addition of Xythos to the portal has helped Griffin to address the University's goals of Outreach, Research, Promotion of Excellence and Enhancement of the Intellectual Experience.

"People know how to use web browsers and web-based tools in general," stated Griffin. "The Xythos interface uses tools that people are already familiar with, is fast - and works!" she declared. As a test, Griffin sent a 'ticket' to her son, a naval officer deployed in the western Pacific Ocean region. He downloaded the file which she had sent him in just seconds - then eight hours later an email she sent him at that very same time arrived, finally.

On the Horizon

LMU's success with Xythos led Griffin and her staff to consider the tool for other needs as well. Like other forward-looking organizations, LMU is also reviewing its records management and archiving procedures in a new light – as new federal requirements for e-discovery are both stringent and immediately enforceable. "Most people are focusing on the email aspects of the new legislation, however we expect the regulations will extend, for example, to documents and calendar appointments as well. The key to complying will be not only an effective and mature storage capability but one that is coupled with search functionality. The RM solution that we need must address all of these issues to be the most effective tool," Griffin added. LMU is evaluating Xythos' record management approach as it moves forward.

Xythos is becoming ubiquitous at LMU. It provides a competitive advantage that allows LMU faculty and staff to have access to colleagues nationally and inter-nationally - and provides a ready method for sharing information and files. Xythos is also starting to be used to manage files that include presentations with embedded audio and to store podcasts. Recently LMU was named one of Apple iTunes new sites. While Apple currently hosts iTunes, Griffin anticipates using Xythos to do this when the University has to host its own files.

Griffin notes that, going forward, almost everything LMU does will be web-based. "In moving to a SOA model, I anticipate that tools like Xythos will be part of a loosely coupled environment, delivering information from our enterprise systems to our constituents. The more I know about Xythos, the more opportunity I see to use it to address new and emerging problems," she concluded.