PrimeArray Solution Simplifies
Pike's Peak Library District's Ability to Share Information with Patrons

Getting information from a library used to be simple. You checked out books on your paper library card or scrolled through reams of microfiche surrounded by towering shelves in a dimly-lit corner.

Fast forward to 2008, when libraries distribute not just books, but digitized content on tapes, CDs, and DVDs. Patrons' cards are of made of plastic and the collections are listed online instead of in card catalogs.

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> Carolyn Coulter
> IT Officer
> Pike's Peak Library District

The Pike's Peak library district is firmly planted in the digital age. Its patrons, many of whom are interested in genealogy, expect fast, easy, online access to the information they need for their research. Thanks to Pike's Peak's PrimeArray ServStation patrons have reliable, streamlined access to CD- and DVD-based information when and where they need it.

The library staff also appreciates the PrimeArray system. They find it takes less time to give patrons what they need, PC CD/DVD drives don't break down as often, and managing the media licenses is much simpler.

A Top-Ten District
The Pike's Peak library district serves the entire county of El Paso, Colorado -- over 2,000 square miles of prairies and mountains, including the majestic Pike's Peak. With over half a million people in its district and over 255,000 active library card holders, it's one of the busiest library districts in the country. The district includes 12 branches, with one more under construction.

In fact, the library was recognized by the prestigious Hennan's American Public Library Ratings (HAPLR), as 9th out of 77 library systems in its size category. The district was bumped into the highest population category possible – 500,000 and larger. The HAPLR rating is based on 15 different measures of efficiency and effectiveness.

Seamless Information Delivery
Any library, not just those that have won national awards, wants to provide patrons with the highest levels of service. Information should be easy to find and access. Now that libraries are distributing information on so many different types of media, they are faced with additional complications.

Much of the important information

patrons need to access is stored on CDs and DVDs. At the Pike's Peak library, providing access to that information used to be somewhat problematic. First, they had to install the CD software on each PC that patrons used. "Then, every time the software was updated we had to touch every single one of those machines," remembers Carolyn Coulter, IT Officer for the district. "Our biggest concern is to make the patrons have a better experience and get what they're looking for easily."

When patrons wanted information on a particular CD or DVD they had to check out the physical CD or DVD from the library desk, and then put it into an available PC to run it. If that PC's CD/DVD drive was malfunctioning, the patron had to find another available system – and the library IT staff had another headache.

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Now, with the PrimeArray ServStation, all the CD/DVD content is pre-loaded onto the server. It's a seamless experience for patrons, who simply find all the information they need already online. No messing around with removable media. No finding out a disc is scratched and unusable. And no worn-out CD/DVD drives on the PCs to contend with.

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Simplified CD/DVD License Management
One of the biggest headaches for a library, or any other institution that manages large numbers of CD/DVDs, is license management. The media is issued with rules as to how many people may access it at one time. It's up to the library staff to stay on top of these rules and ensure they are enforced.

This is where a system from PrimeArray can be a huge help. The ServStation includes a design feature that lessens the burden of disc management and ensures

the library follows all the licensing rules. This is a feature that Coulter especially appreciates: "A lot of the CDs include two or three licenses, which means that you can only have that number of people accessing them at the same time. The system monitors that. If a fourth person tries to access the information, they're notified that it's not available at the present time and to try back later. We don't violate any of our licensing agreements and it's much easier to manage."

Keeping Pace with Growing Needs
Digitized information can grow exponentially, especially in a library. Pike's Peak needed a system that was scalable. Fortunately, the PrimeArray system will easily keep pace with the library district's growing needs. They recently doubled their hard disk capacity, expanding the CD/DVD server's ability to store general data.

Coulter notes that PrimeArray was very helpful in steering them to a solution that was scalable: "They were very good about giving us the lowdown on each of the models. And when we needed to upgrade it, they were very clear that we had made the right decision, which I was glad about. It gave us options."

Special Treatment for Special Collections
Pike's Peak uses its PrimeArray

system to manage and distribute information in its Special Collections, which includes everything from digitized photos of El Paso's mining heritage to extensive genealogy resources.

The library's PrimeArray system includes an optional network attached storage (NAS) capability. This helps them store and share their rich local history, including video and audio interviews with people from the area. Priceless history, such as the video and audio files of local citizens who participated in the Library's "De Donde Eres" local history project..

Patrons have used the PrimeArray system thousands of times since it was installed, and are pleased to have reliable, easy access to the Special Collections information. The library staff finds that the PrimeArray system makes it easier for them to get information into the hands of the patrons who need it – there are fewer steps, making their jobs far less complicated. By not having to focus on handing out and collecting physical discs they can focus on other, more core aspects of their jobs.

Steady as a Rock
Not only does the PrimeArray ServStation work as a de facto backup of the library's CDs and DVDs, it makes the information

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consistently available to patrons. Coulter says "I haven't had any significant downtime with it. We haven't had to call in maintenance on it at all."

Speaking of peers in other libraries, Coulter says "I would recommend that they talk to PrimeArray if they're in a similar situation of needing to deliver CD/DVD information. There are a lot of NAS's out there, but PrimeArray offers the CD/DVD sharing we need. And their equipment seems to be very stable and solid."

Sharing "Local Drive Only" CDs and DVDs

Genealogy research is especially popular in the El Paso area. Because so much of the genealogy tools and data are distributed via CDs and DVDs, it was crucial that Pike's Peak find a way to meet the demand for this information in an efficient, cost-effective way.

However, the library has found that some of its CDs and DVDs are

created in such a way that they had to be physically placed in a PC's local reader drive in order to work. But the PrimeArray ServStation addresses this issue with its remote mapping feature, which allows copied CD and DVD images on the ServStation to appear as if they are in the user's local reader drive. This is far superior to the old method of handing CDs and DVDs out to the patrons and requiring them to run them in each PC. Although some CDs are not suited to this environment, most work quite well in this way.

Coulter notes that "In the past, genealogy information was on one-off CDs, and only one person could access each of those CDs at a time. Now they're up on our PrimeArray system where it's much easier for patrons to get to their information."

Positive ROI

The PrimeArray system has paid off for Pike's Peak, in more ways than one. Coulter says "…it's a very good return on investment. And

I think it has simplified our lives quite a bit, as it has for the patrons and the staff who deal with the patrons. It's just easier. It's a more sophisticated approach to providing this information."

The PrimeArray system has also allowed the IT and library desk staff to focus on their jobs, not handing out CDs and DVDs. Says Coulter, "The PC support staff doesn't have to mess around with the machines as much as they used to. Any time that you're using a moving part, like a CD drive, it wears out. Then you end up swapping out PCs or their drives. I think this issue has been lessened by the fact that they're networked now. It's a time-saver for my support staff."

By using a PrimeArray ServStation to store, manage, and distribute its poplar Special Collections material the Pike's Peak library doesn't just make its patrons happy. It saves time, money, and lots of headaches for the busy library staff.