Atriuum Library Management Program
Case Study
Blount County Public Library

Interview conducted with K.C. Williams, Director

Located in Maryville, Tennessee, the Blount County Public Library (BCPL) serves a diverse community of 125,000 residents. The community is a retirement destination as well as a strong center of industry and advanced technology. The library serves this community from one 90,000 square foot facility, one-third of which is currently an unfinished lower level, allowing room for future growth. Built in 2002, this busy facility is open 70 hours a week and houses a collection of about 300,000 items.

The Challenge: Combining a Robust ILS with Ease of Implementation and Use
Not many libraries migrate to a new integrated library system (ILS) twice in one year—but BCPL did! According to K. C. Williams, BCPL Director, the library was part of a consortium using an ILS that was robust in functionality but not easy for staff to manage. She describes herself as technically savvy with a lot of familiarity with using databases and the former system didn't provide the capability that she wanted to access and manipulate the library's data.

"I have been fortunate in my career to be able to explore my love of technology and its application to libraries," Williams says. "I have developed and conducted many workshops on using computer software and Internet tools as well as Staff Development Training on using library resources for research in a wide variety of areas. In my previous directorship I taught Application Software Training and prior to that I developed and taught a 35-hour IT Technology Boot Camp. So I think it's safe to say I have been around a lot of library systems and my experience in a variety of library settings is definitely pertinent to my perspective on ILS functionality."

When Tennessee selected a statewide ILS vendor BCPL migrated to the new system but found it too simplistic for their needs. Williams couldn't pull the data she wanted to analyze library usage and the library staff were frustrated with the lack of functionality they had grown accustomed to having.

"Before joining BCPL in 2014 I oversaw the migration to Atriuum at two different libraries with multiple branches and found it very user friendly and easy to understand," Williams says. "On the back end Atriuum offers robust functionality while on the front end it is easy to run and use. At those libraries we were able to migrate from our old systems to Atriuum in a very short period of time and staff needed just a half-day of training to be off and running."

As a result of her prior experience, Williams was confident in the decision to leave the statewide system and implement Atriuum at BCPL. The cut-over to the live system was accomplished in one day. "Having worked previously with Book Systems, I was very comfortable with our selection of Atriuum. I knew the system, the company, and their quality of work. They are extremely responsive to requests and don't nickel and dime you every time you ask for a report, an enhancement, etc."

Key Benefits of Using Atriuum
Williams has now used Atriuum in three different libraries, so she offers a deep perspective on the benefits it brings to any size library.

- **Ability to handle a large volume of transactions**. "I think there's a perception that Atriuum is just for very small libraries. At BCPL we circulate between 750,000 and 800,000 items a year and have a fairly large database for one building in Tennessee. At any given time we are likely to have 10 or 20 staff members in and out of the database simultaneously. Atriuum can easily handle our circulation volume and other database work."

- **Affordability.** Williams estimates the move to Atriuum has saved BCPL approximately $6,000 in annual maintenance costs. "Migrating to Atriuum is saving the library a fortune," she says.

- **Access to and Control over Data.** For Williams, the ability to access the library's data without having to request help from the ILS vendor is extremely important. "The data in the database belongs to the library and I should be able to get to any part of it that I need. With Atriuum I can download all of our data myself." She also likes the batch change functionality that allows her to easily move, edit, and re-classify collections.

- **Easy to Use.** Atriuum provides templates that staff can use to customize the OPAC with themes, colors, headers and footers, and links. For example, authorized staff can customize the OPAC with a holiday theme and link to holiday titles in the catalog. Williams says they love that Atriuum searches the catalog and Overdrive simultaneously so that library customers see all the holdings at one time. Customers can save titles in their virtual Bookbag or create a personal Wish List to be notified when the titles on their list are added to the collection.

- **Easy to Understand.** The OPAC search widget includes shortcut buttons (icons) as well as drop-down menus so patrons can search the way they prefer. The navigation panel makes it easy to search <u>within</u> results, narrow by relevance or reading level, and determine how many other titles are available with the same subject heading. Help files focus on process and are valuable for learning the basics of the program or for a refresher tutorial on parts of the system not used frequently.

- **Superior Customer Service.** Williams says Book Systems has an effective and responsive way for managing requests for enhancements. To make a request she simply emails Customer Support and explains what she's trying to do. This generates a case number and a dialogue with the person who's investigating the request. "Sometimes, it just gets done—I like that. And, I don't get a bill. The Book Systems staff really are committed to helping you do what you want to do."

- **Mobile access.** Atriuum has three mobile apps—one for library patrons available through App stores and two others for administrators to manage both circulation and inventory. Each of these has been very successfully used by staff and patrons and make library resources accessible to customers when and where they need them.

- **Scalability.** The library is planning a website overhaul to create an "online branch." This will include the ability for people to pay fines and fees with PayPal. Williams says this is an important step for the library and Atriuum has the features and capabilities they need to integrate with their ambitious new plans.

- **Statistics and reporting.** Williams has significant experience using data and databases and values highly the wide variety of reports available through Atriuum. She regularly uses the pre-configured reports and has created many customized reports on her own that she saves and re-uses. Of the statistical reports, she uses all those that allow her to easily see how patrons are using the library's resources—how they search, what terms they are using to search, and what materials they are using.

  The reporting capabilities of Atriuum are a highlight of the system, says Williams. She points to several aspects of the reporting functionality that stand out for her.

  — The move to Atriuum allowed the library to solve a problem they had previously with state level reporting. BCPL has a media center where they house all their AV materials—audio books, CD, and DVDs. That location adds another level to the call number. Tennessee state reporting requires libraries to report statistics broken down by adult or juvenile classification. With their previous systems BCPL was unable to generate reports to show media type and adult or media type and juvenile. With Atriuum they are able to run reports that show media type and adult or juvenile classification.

  — The ability to track in-house use of materials (e.g., magazines, newspapers or reference materials that don't circulate) is also very valuable for garnering the full picture of library use. "For materials used in house we ask customers to return them to certain places in the library so we can include them in our overall statistics of materials being used."

  — After the migration to Atriuum, the library did an inventory of the entire collection. They were able to do the inventory over a period of time without having to close the library because Atriuum allows staff to inventory just an area or even a shelf. She says they generated some specific reports during that process that proved very useful.

Finally, Williams says, it's the quality of the company that continues to impress her. "Book Systems isn't a huge company, but their people are vested in what they do," she says. "They recruit and keep good talent. Over the 15 years I've been associated with them I am still using the same tech support people…and that says a lot.

"I have been a librarian for 30 years and I wouldn't have any other ILS. I'm hard to impress. Book Systems has never let me down."