Soutron's Ease of Customisation and Updating Helps St Mary's Seminary, a Special Academic Library, Improve Access to Information

St. Mary's Seminary
HOUSTON, TEXAS

INTRODUCTION

The Cardinal Beran Library is the central resource for learning and research in theological scholarship for the School of Theology at St. Mary's Seminary, which was established in 1901.

The library is also a resource for the wider multi-cultural community of Catholic clerical, religious and lay ecclesial ministries of the Galveston-Houston Archdiocese, which has over 1.7 million members from around the world that prays and celebrates in over 14 languages in 146 parishes.

The library currently holds over 66,000 items, with a strong emphasis on theological and philosophical works, and nearly 500 items in special collections (not including archives).

Items are mostly in English, though the theology collection has a number of foreign, specifically Spanish, Latin, and Greek, titles.

The library also offers access to print and electronic academic journals, as well as to the online databases available through the University of Saint Thomas' Doherty Library.

CHALLENGE

The Beran Library is a special academic library, whose information access needs span from that of priests, to academic seminary students, and across to the broader needs of the local community.

A long-term AGent VERSO user from Auto-Graphics, the library began looking for a library software solution that would provide a better user interface, customised for their unique audiences.

The library wanted the user interface to have better outward facing pages to look more academic, but not like a K-12 school that is geared towards children. They needed a library solution that served the needs of Masters-level higher education pupils as well as the broader community the library serves.

"We wanted something more academic and robust, that was easy to update and manage," states Ashley Pitts, Librarian at St. Mary's Seminary. "We researched what was needed on the Internet, checked out what was available, and discovered most products were geared towards K-12 or public libraries." Which was when they learned about Soutron.

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>
> **Ashley Pitts, Librarian,**
> **St Mary's Seminary**

SOLUTION

The Beran Library settled on Soutron due to its ease of search portal customisation, ability to handle their multi-lingual collection, ease of cataloguing, acquisitions functionality, and client services. From the start of implementation, "Soutron was an improvement," states Ashley.

Custom Search Portal

The Beran Library's new library portal takes advantage of Soutron's ability to customise the layout to feature immediate access to frequently used collections. Collections from within their Soutron database and links to external academic resources are all presented in their new library search portal, helping the library to address the information access needs of the St. Mary's Seminary user community.
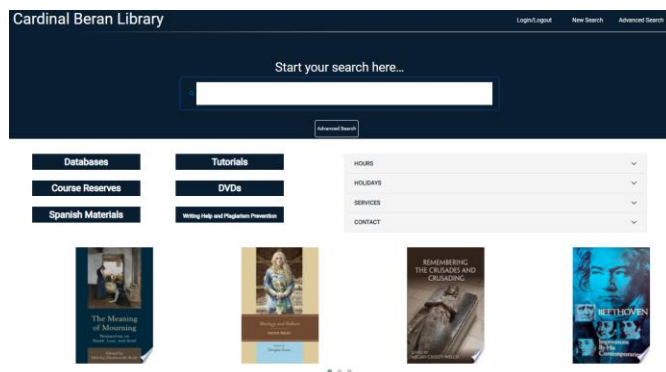
The library uses Soutron's Saved Search functionality to create custom buttons on their portal page with links leading users to Course Reserves, Spanish materials, and audiovisual collections, along with an external ink to academic databases available through University of St Thomas (UST). They have also taken advantage of the ability to customise the search facets to facilitate searches for their Latin, Spanish and Greek materials.

Since it is important that Seminarians and lay people know how to use the library and access its materials, custom links in the portal lead to tutorials on how to use the library, from simple searches to advanced searches that access special collection materials.

"With Soutron it's easy for our users to access materials," states Ashley.

Cataloguing

Cataloguing physical and digital items in Soutron database is easy with copy cataloguing, the ability to add new fields with flexible field descriptors, rich text, relational linking, and multi-lingual polyhierarchical thesaurus functionality.

It is easy for the library to add and change fields to meet the cataloguing needs of different types of materials. As an example, since Seminary instructors often want a book that has been translated or illustrated by a certain person, new cataloguing fields of translator and illustrator were added, along with their custom search facets.

"I appreciate that you don't have to know MARC coding to fix an entry," states Ashley. "You don't have to be a trained cataloguer to do fixes in Soutron."

Thesaurus

The Soutron thesaurus is a fully integrated and fundamental part of the Soutron Library Management System, responsible for managing terminology, indexes and the relationships between terms. The Thesaurus provides for the control of vocabularies and taxonomies for fields such as Subjects and Keywords by creating a hierarchy of preferred terms that guide library staff and users to the most appropriate term. It addresses the challenge of inconsistent content, helping to regulate vocabulary and minimise the occurrence of outmoded or discredited terms.

"We love the Thesaurus," states Ashley. "It makes life easier; we don't have to look up each item to fix things."

Acquisitions

Library staff also appreciate Soutron Acquisitions, which offers fast, comprehensive order processing workflows.

The acquisitions module has changed internal processes at the Beran Library, since they can now easily manage their budgets and no longer rely on spreadsheets.

RESULTS

The Beran library now has a custom, special academic library portal that helps them meet the information needs of their multi-cultural user communities, that is easy for the library to maintain and keep up to date with new materials.

"I enjoy working with Soutron tech support and IT," states Ashley, "They were super-helpful setting the system up and they jumped in to help even after our training sessions ended."

Newly introduced to the Soutron help desk is a "New Feature" suggestion box available to all clients, which provides for a transparent product development process. "Soutron IT is super receptive, they will talk to R&D about features, and work with us to find a work around, they are really awesome about that," Ashley adds. "We are looking forward to using the customer new feature suggestion box."

The suggestion box allows clients to suggest, vote on, and track new development ideas, ensuring that Soutron product solutions are built to be customer centric.

The Beran Library at St Mary's Seminary can be accessed here:
www.soutron.com/stmarys-seminary

To find out how you can migrate to a fast, secure, cloud-based library management system to support your organisation's library, start a conversation with Soutron Global today:
www.soutron.com