

LSC 555 Group Project Spring 2013
Jean Nudell, Bridget Ryan, & Becca Tanen
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Part 1: Description of the organization, goals, and technology plan

Our group project will analyze the library system and technology goals of the Bishop O'Connell High School in Arlington, VA. The 55-year-old Catholic school supports a student body of more than 1,200 students ([About Us](#)). We interviewed two faculty members at Bishop O'Connell: Frank Roque, the school's IT manager, and Sue Baxter, the school librarian. Mr. Roque is responsible for administering the schools' technology system and maintaining the school's servers and support systems.

The school's primary goal, Mr. Roque explained, is "to deliver Catholic-centric learning, but to use all the tools necessary that we can." One of the primary aspects of the school's technology plan is its recently instituted "BYOD" (bring your own device) policy. In order to support this plan, the school has a wider goal of supporting wireless infrastructure, firewalls, and web content filtering. Mr. Roque said this is something he is "constantly working on [and] trying to improve, little by little."

As the only full-time librarian at Bishop O'Connell, Ms. Baxter is responsible for selecting an information system for the school. She currently uses LibraryWorld, which Ms. Baxter says, "it has its glitches," but meets most of the school's information needs at a reasonable monetary cost. The school upgraded to a new version of Library World last year, but both Mr. Roque and Ms. Baxter feel they will need to convert to a cloud-based system in the near future. On April 8, Ms. Baxter received the news that LibraryWorld will no longer support the version of the program Bishop O'Connell is using; as of September 1, 2013 and she will be forced to begin using their cloud-based offering. However, Ms. Baxter does not want to switch over to the cloud until she has thoroughly weeded the collection.

In addition to daily maintenance and patron services, the Bishop O'Connell library is recovering from a recent major data loss. Last summer, there was an issue with the server that ran backup for the library system, and all of the system data was lost. They were able to recover some of the data, and Ms. Baxter was able to fill in the rest because she maintains regular shelf lists.

Part 2: Description of the information technology infrastructure, system architecture, and operation

While Bishop O'Connell High School is part of the Arlington Diocese school system, it is given a lot of freedom with regard to its information technology operations. Bishop O'Connell is relatively independent due to its being a private school and belonging to a diocese of only four high schools. It has its own two-member information technology staff that is responsible for managing the school's IT infrastructure and dealing with any technology problems that may arise at school or library. The two-member staff consists of an IT manager and his assistant, whom they call a technical specialist. We met with the IT manager during our visit to the school.

The IT manager, Frank Roque, and his assistant are responsible for dealing with all IT-related procedures at the school. Therefore, Mr. Roque spends most of his workdays going to different parts of the school to handle the issues that have come up or answer the questions of teachers and other staff members. He chose to meet with us in the library before we met with the school's librarian because the school library was the primary the focus of our interviews. However, Mr. Roque does have his own office, and the school has a centrally located technology room that houses all of the servers, on which content is held, and routers through which access is routed. The school's technology setup has all of the necessary components for a 21st century school.

As half of the school's IT staff, Mr. Roque is responsible for helping to manage the school's library system, in addition to all of the other systems used throughout the school. He tries to help resolve tech issues, and when unable to do so he contacts technical support on behalf of the school. Mr. Roque also maintains user privileges, which allow the teachers and staff to access the tools they need to complete their jobs but only allows the students to the sections of programs they need to learn the course material or use the facility. Additionally, he backs up of all of the school's data, which includes the library data. Bishop O'Connell High School has chosen a fairly standard approach to backup, which includes the use of Norton Backup Executive to do daily incremental backups and a weekly full backup. The IT manager also completes any updates to software once they have been approved. Most of these updates, certainly the major ones, happen during the summer when the systems are not needed. All of these behind-the-scenes actions contribute to ensuring that the school's technology systems are available to perform when they are needed.

Different areas of the school require different technology setups to perform the specific day-to-day functions of that unit. Those responsible for each department have freedom from the Diocese to make decisions about their own technology setup, and then get approval from the school's principal. The diocese does not have specific programs that schools must use to complete the various functions; each school may pick its own integrated library system (ILS). This individuality was one of the reasons that we chose Bishop O'Connell as the subject of this project, because it allowed us to closely investigate the information system of an organization.

The library has the technology setup that one would expect for a private school facing the same budget constraints as many public school systems. The physical setup is very familiar: there is a main circulation desk with a computer, one computer for instructional use, a library

office with its own computer, and twenty-three computers for student use. Students may complete school assignments at the library, either during a class visit, before or after school, or during lunch. The library allows students to use the printer, and charges a small fee after the first sheet. There is an area with several tables and chairs large enough for a class. The library has set up an LCD TV near the tables and chairs, so the librarians can use a laptop for instruction. The software setup is also very similar to other schools we are familiar with. They have a basic ILS, which allows the librarians to manage the library, and provides an online catalog where students and staff can search for materials.

The library uses an ILS called LibraryWorld, and have used the same system since 1992. LibraryWorld offers an administrative package and an online catalog for patrons to find materials. Students have the ability to perform either a basic search or an advanced search, although most choose the basic search due to its similarity to Internet search engines. The administrative aspects of the program allow the librarians to perform all of the basic functions they need. Ms. Baxter can circulate books, as well as add and delete books from the collection. They can also generate many different kinds of reports, and set circulation policies such as length of borrowing time. Circulation is a very simple process and is handled in ways that would be familiar to users of any other ILS, even the interface is slightly different. Adding materials is a simple matter of bringing up a blank record and filling in the appropriate information before saving. To delete materials, the librarian just brings up an existing record by selecting it or scanning the item, and then clicks delete. Overdue books and statistics reports are very easy to generate with a few simple clicks. LibraryWorld offers other reports and the ability to customize, but these are the two that Ms. Baxter uses most often.

LibraryWorld has been in use at Bishop O'Connell for several years, but Ms. Baxter would like to upgrade. There are several things she does not like about her current version of LibraryWorld. However, if the school were to update their software, they would need to convert to a cloud-based system in order to remain with the same company. Since this switch may not be feasible in the near future, Ms. Baxter is considering switching to Follett, which is another ILS used by other diocesan high schools.

Part 3: Analysis and Recommendations

While improvements may be made to any system, we believe that the current system at Bishop O'Connell seems to meet the needs of the staff and students. According to Ms. Baxter, it easily completes all of the basic functions the school requires, such as access to materials, managing statistics and circulation records, adding and removing materials, and setting and adjusting circulation policies. Ms. Baxter did mention one change she would like made to the system. She would like for the system to have different alert noises, so she could be alerted if there were a problem with a barcode or a student account even if she was not looking at the screen.

Though the students are reluctant to use the online catalog, because they would rather use online sources, the OPAC seems to be user-friendly. It allows basic searching and expert searching, and has the capability for multiple sort functions. Ms. Baxter teaches a "how to use your library" class to freshmen, and gives a brief refresher to other classes as they come into the library on how to use the system and do proper searching. Faculty and staff, however, must teach themselves how to use the OPAC system because there was not enough money to send them to a training session in California. While more training may be beneficial, the OPAC is user-friendly enough that those who already know how to use the system can easily train others.

Because the system suits the basic needs of the school, most of the recommendations we have for improving the system are not essential, but rather offer extra features that would be nice for them to have. The one necessary improvement would be upgrading the system and moving to the cloud. This would not only add features and potentially allow students to access the catalog off-campus, but would also be better from a system maintenance perspective, since companies are more willing to work with people who have the latest system. Also, as previously mentioned, LibraryWorld will no longer support Bishop O'Connell's current system as of September 1, 2013, so by that time they must either upgrade to LibraryWorld's cloud-based system or use a different company's system that does not require use of the cloud. This is why as soon as the funds are available, and Ms. Baxter finishes weeding the collection, we recommend that they move to a new system in the cloud.

If more money were available, Ms. Baxter would like to have more databases available, which could only benefit the students. In addition, she would like to have more computers or iPads for students to use, which will better prepare them for college. We would also recommend adding more e-books in an effort to get students to use "books" again. Many textbook publishers now offer e-book versions, so it would be good for the students to become more comfortable using that technology. The school could also consider looking into the purchase of a few e-readers, again, simply to make students more comfortable with the technology. However, e-readers are only a suggestion, and should only be considered if the school suddenly had expendable funds, or received a grant for such a purchase.

Another feature that we would recommend adding is a sharing option, such as inter-library loan. Sharing access to library materials with a nearby university, other Catholic schools in the diocese, or even the nearest public library system could improve access to materials for

students. Although it would be additional work for Ms. Baxter, the system does have the capability for sharing, and it would benefit the students greatly by allowing them access to different materials. It could also be advantageous for students who are enrolled in the dual credit program with Marymount University. While their current library collection probably meets most of the students' information needs, having more access could help them as well.

Finally, we recommend that the library conduct an occasional satisfaction survey on the OPAC, to see how the system is working, and determine if it is fulfilling user needs. It could be beneficial to have both students and staff complete the survey, so the library could get the perspective of the students as well as teachers. The survey could also help Ms. Baxter determine if the current system is the right system for their school. It also may be valuable to do a survey on users' satisfaction with the databases. Taking a survey on the databases could help Ms. Baxter determine which databases are being used the most, and which ones the students and teachers feel best fulfill their needs. While Mr. Baxter already conducts an informal survey after the trial of a new database, surveying users about existing databases may help her decide if she should eliminate one or add another.

Conclusion

The Bishop O'Connell School library offers a basic and simple information system for its students and staff. The library has its own system and does not exchange information with other Catholic schools in the diocese, so its sole patrons are the students of Bishop O'Connell. The system's administrators, IT manager Frank Roque and librarian Sue Baxter, selected LibraryWorld based on what would best serve their students' needs and offer ease of use for administrative work.

LibraryWorld supports the basic user functions of searching the catalog and checking materials in and out. Ms. Baxter can easily add or delete item records, adjust circulation policies, and generate system reports about circulation or overdue items. The simplicity of the system acts as an advantage because the school cannot afford to train teachers and staff in using the catalog. Students are reluctant to use the catalog because they prefer Internet search engines such as Google, but the basic OPAC system is simple enough that students and teachers alike may learn how to navigate it.

Although LibraryWorld serves most of the Bishop O'Connell school library's essential needs, Ms. Baxter will soon need to upgrade to a new system, especially since LibraryWorld soon will not support the current system. The library will need to upgrade to a cloud-based system when this change occurs. Ms. Baxter said school library might switch over to Follett, since many Catholic schools use that system.

From both a system maintenance standpoint and a user perspective, we recommend that Bishop O'Connell invest in a cloud computing system for its library. Since the library lost all its data in a server failure last year, it would be wise for them to convert to a cloud-based system in order to ensure that their information is secure. They should also try to select a cloud system that enables additional features in which Ms. Baxter expressed an interest, such as using different sound alerts for various circulation transactions, or including images to go with item records. We also recommend that the new system should support record sharing with other school libraries in the diocese, in order to expand the number of materials available to students.

Another practice the library should consider instituting is conducting surveys on user experience. Since the school lacks the time and resources for training staff and students in using the system, Ms. Baxter could instead conduct informal surveys to determine whether the system

is meeting user needs. The Bishop O'Connell School demonstrates how even libraries serving a small, specific user group may need a cloud-based system to better suit the needs of the IT manager, librarian, and patrons.