



Promoting Library Excellence Through Efficiency



ares
automating reserves

ARES® RESERVES MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE CASE STUDY

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Crystal Hester, Course Reserves Coordinator & Main Service Desk Services*

Case Study Follow-up: One Year Later

"In the first week of school, the library had more reserve materials up earlier than ever before, ready for students to use and increasing faculty satisfaction. We have tripled reserve use, attracting faculty to the library for the first time from fields such as the hard sciences. Although we have done some formal marketing, in large part I attribute the growth in usage to word of mouth.

"The use of cloning has resulted in much better time to production during periods of increased volume. Cloning means less re-keying which reduces task time and diminishes errors. Because cloning is easy, this work can be allocated to staff that have never helped with reserves.

"A side benefit of cloning was brought to my attention by a faculty member who said he is now 'invested' in using Ares because he'll be able to access the information if he teaches the same class in a few years. This saves time, which is good, and gets the information out faster for students, 'which is even better.'

"Our challenge is keeping up with increased demand. We have trained more department staff to help during peak times and are broadening the skills of the interlibrary loan staff. With cross-training, we are using current staff and don't need to incur the expense of hiring extra people. With continued growth in Ares usage we might need to seek long-term supplemental staffing, perhaps even from other library departments. Luckily, student assistants want to work with Ares because it's interesting technology, and the staff are energized by new clients and increased volume and services!

"Ares has caused a culture change in the way the library is perceived. People who hadn't used the library are now walking in and expecting to post reserve items themselves. A new audience for library services has been created, which we plan to extend to even more departments this fall, building on and increasing that word of mouth satisfaction and built-in PR."


Case Western Reserve E-Reserves Challenge

For Karen Oye, service is all about delivering on the library's brand promise of great service experiences. Case Western Reserve was an early adopter of ILLiad, recognizing the value of replacing a cumbersome mixed-format interlibrary loan process with an efficient, automated, electronic system. Staff and library customers responded to ILLiad with great enthusiasm and Karen saw the potential to eliminate "the last bastion of tedious library processes" by using the best of ILLiad to create a course reserves product.

From the faculty's point of view, the old library e-reserves system was "just a big black hole." They

couldn't see what they had placed on reserve or when, or find out the status of an item's submission. Staff working at the Main Service Desk, the natural service point, had to leave the desk to ask for help from nearby Reserve student assistants or staff. Students couldn't easily find their class items and if the item was 'in process' they had no reliable information about it. "In a world where information is available anytime and from anywhere, this was just not an acceptable business practice," Karen says.

Karen investigated existing products, sharing with department staff and reviewing what the optimal reserve



service would be, but the solutions simply were “like putting another coat of paint on an old boat.” With a lean staff and student employee turnover, the library needed an automated product that would be easy to learn and easy to use. “I kept looking at ILLiad, knowing the answer was there, so I asked ‘What if...’ I had great faith in ILLiad and, after the initial discussion, I trusted Atlas to deliver the right course reserves product.”

Case Western Reserve Faculty and Students Embrace Ares’ Convenience

According to Karen, one of the best features is that Ares gives the library an opportunity to engage in conversations with the faculty. The faculty who’ve used it come into the Kelvin Smith Library with their colleagues; staff sees them demonstrating how easy Ares is to use and hears Teaching Assistants (TAs) telling each other how great the reserves system is. “Ares gives us a positive public relations opportunity with otherwise hard to reach customers. It’s built-in PR—happy faculty offering praise. You can’t beat that.”

Ares allows the library to be responsive to faculty in a way that wasn’t possible before. For example, the university added a new three-week intensive session after spring term called Maymester. The professor for “The Paris Experience” was already in France and the students were on their way to Paris. The professor emailed Reserve staff and was encouraged to log on to Ares and follow the menu. Half an hour later, she had uploaded her course information and content for the students. It was online and ready for them while they were still en route to France. After only a few minutes’ time from library staff, the professor, library staff and the students had instant access to their class resources from any Internet-enabled computer, in any country. Says Karen, “Geography no longer matters!”

The ability for faculty to authorize TAs to upload everything for their courses reduces faculty workload. TAs in Pennsylvania on winter break uploaded English classes with ease. And with Ares’ real-time tracking and statistics, faculty can see reports of what items have been used during the semester, information they never had before. Data helps them do a better job of managing what they put up for students and can improve the quality of their class content, since it’s entirely online.

Library public service staff who field questions appreciate knowing that since submissions are electronic from the very first step of a reserve course item, the information online is correct and consistent at all times, *for all users*. Everyone can see everything on one screen, and faculty and staff can easily switch from student to faculty mode with one click. Ares has made faculty lives easier, and they frequently compliment “the library.” As Karen observed, “It’s interesting to see them have an exceptional reserves experience and compliment not just the service but *the entire organization*. A product like Ares reflects positively on the entire library, giving us another great PR moment!

“Our reputation is our brand,” says Karen. “Ares gives the library great visibility and wins us significant support from faculty and TAs.”

And, she adds, support from students as well. Students in a hurry (or who have forgotten some information) can search Ares for any item using any field—part of a book title, class name, or faculty name—to find what they need for the class. They can customize their own hot lists and alerts on their own class lists, creating reminders to themselves. Important information is all in one spot, a top priority for them.

Library Staff See Productivity Enhancements

Karen particularly enjoys that library staff and student assistants love doing their jobs on Ares. Several specific features have made significant improvements in their daily tasks.

- **Integration of all formats.** Ares easily integrates reserves for documents, DVDs, CDs, books, faculty notes and syllabi, and licensed electronic resources, all in one place.
- **Copyright management.** At Case Western Reserve, faculty members are responsible for procuring copyright, but they need some help. With Ares, library staff quickly can see if an item has been used before, which sets up an automatic customized alert to the faculty member. When faculty log on to their pages, they see helpful links for the public domain chart and Fair Use Test. There was no easy way to help faculty with these issues before the library implemented Ares.
- **Link checker.** Ares checks all web links automatically every day. This saves the staff an incredible amount of time, since they have to look in only one location to make sure everything is working. Since student assistants aren't needed to do this work anymore, the library has reduced hours for dedicated reserve students, reallocated them and saved money while increasing service.
- **Increased access to library resources.** Ares makes it easy to add a persistent URL to licensed content. Faculty are more aware of what the library has purchased. This saves time and reduces the need to scan documents.
- **Improved communication and collection development.** Staff uses customizable templates to send orders to the acquisitions department for reserve items the library doesn't own. Through queues, automated notices, and tracking, both library staff and faculty always know what items have been ordered for them. They aren't "mystery items" any longer.
- **Processing efficiency.** The labels for reserve books contain all pertinent information in one place and are easy to generate from the system information. Labels reduce the need to touch an item repeatedly (especially important to management) and they don't get torn off like paper book bands do. Labels save time and information and contribute to the professional look of the library's brand of unexpected service levels. As reserve staff says, "Labels. Priceless!"
- **Locating personal copies.** Kelvin Smith Library often has dozens of faculty personal copies on reserve, which require special handling and take untold amounts of time to return at the end of a semester. Often it would take days to sift through the items because they had been bar-coded and looked like library-owned materials. Library staff created an Ares search to identify all the personal copies that needed to be returned to individuals instead of to the library shelves. The list revealed three times what they'd had in other semesters, but in an hour the books were all pulled, bagged, and labeled and sent to mail services! At the end of the semester when there's an avalanche of returned materials and fewer staff to handle it, time-savings like this are significant. The list also sparked a creative moment: reserve staff leveraged the list for another use and forwarded it to subject librarians for review and potential acquisitions for the collection.

Ares Supports Library Marketing

According to Karen Oye, implementing Ares has really saved on student staff time, and the number of reserves has increased. She says the library is "finally" in the position to actively market its reserve service, and is taking up the challenge by doing it with the Business School, now that they have a proven product that they know won't "kill the library staff" in the name of success. The library also issues a guarantee to faculty to encourage early reserves for the fall, recognizing that

Case students like to get a head start on their reading before classes actually begin. (*"Items received by August 1st are guaranteed to be online before classes begin. Guaranteed. Period."*) The guarantee not only got the faculty's attention: the ease of Ares resulted in a surprise for library staff. A number of faculty members (including one prominent, frequently traveling business professor) completed 100% of their courses on Ares. The surprise? The courses were for Fall 2008 and they were done by early May 2008—an amazing accomplishment.

"Ares has really changed the culture for the library. All we have to do is show the faculty how it works and pretty soon they're telling each other 'This IS easy.' Ares is a service that markets itself. We love to overhear these conversations in the library. And we know that often, regardless of promotions and news we create, the most effective marketing tool can be peers and their comments."

About Case Western Reserve and Kelvin Smith Library

Case Western Reserve University is located in the University Circle area of Cleveland, surrounded by museums, parks, galleries, and restaurants. More than 9,300 students attend Case and enjoy a 9:1 student-to-faculty ratio. Case ranks in the top 15 among private universities in federal funding for research. Case is also one of the six founding members of the OhioLINK academic library consortium, now 87-members strong.

The Kelvin Smith Library, one of four management-center libraries on campus, is the main library of the university and serves undergraduate and graduate

students, faculty, and staff. The library collections are rich and varied, at nearly 1.7 million items—books, journals, microfilm, scripts, government documents, GIS, electronic content, media, theses and dissertations (electronic and print), and growing digital collections and projects, including Digital Case, the university repository. The library also has a recently created digital learning center on the main floor—the Freedman Digital Library, Language Learning, and Multimedia Center—where Case individuals can go "from inspiration to presentation" of their projects. Compact shelving is used throughout the library to create open spaces, invite collaboration, and support and most importantly encourage changing patterns of scholarship and learning for faculty, staff, and students. For more information on the library, visit <http://library.case.edu>.

About Atlas and Ares

Atlas Systems is a software development company founded in July 1995 with the mission of developing library automation to "promote library excellence through efficiency." Atlas is best known for the ILLiad Interlibrary Loan Management Software, in use in over 900 libraries and now distributed exclusively by OCLC. The Ares system automates library reserve services, provides around-the-clock access to reserves collections includes integrated copyright management services, and saves time for faculty members and library staff.

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This case study was developed based on an interview conducted with Karen Oye and Crystal Hester by Judith A. Michaelson, MLS, principal of JAM Marketing, LLC. JAM Marketing is a marketing consulting firm focused on helping organizations design and implement short-term marketing strategies that yield long-term results.