

HILLSDALE COMMUNITY LIBRARY

SERVING THE COMMUNITY OF HILLSDALE SINCE 1908.

Background Story

Dreams of a community library came early to the picturesque city of Hillsdale, located in the rolling, fertile hills of South Central Michigan. In 1879 a group of women formed a library association, gathered a collection of 522 books, and began to “circulate good literature among the people of Hillsdale.” Library services, in one form or another, have now been offered for nearly 140 years.



Today the Hillsdale Community Library is housed in a two-million-dollar, state-of-the-art building with a collection of over 50,000 volumes. The library facility, built in 2003, includes dedicated space for children’s programs, a young adults’ area, more computers, an Early Literacy Station (ELS) for children, and a spacious community meeting room. Library director, Mary Hill, is dedicated to continuing the dream of providing outstanding service for the Hillsdale area population of almost 12,000 people. Her biggest concern? How to keep up with the ever-changing needs of today’s library patrons on a tight budget while managing complex library operations like cataloging physical books alongside eBooks and managing their circulating inventory.

“Next to managing our library operations, our biggest challenge is finances,” she says. “We’re just not a well-funded library. I’m on the road trying to ask for money a lot. Yesterday, I went to Kiwanis to obtain funds toward summer reading. I’m writing a lot of grants.” Like state-funded public libraries across the country, Hillsdale is competing for scarce resources while trying to expand and update service. Today’s library is constantly reinventing itself as community needs change.

“I love the fact that libraries attract more people than any other public institution with the exception of Walmart!” Hill says, “This really hammers home the power of public libraries in today’s democracy. We are doing important and powerful work and changing the lives of many, many people!”

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The Vision

The Hillsdale Community Library vision statement includes a pledge to "provide a welcoming environment to all, make the best technology available to serve the information needs of the community, and encourage lifelong learning."

With its mission of "serving the informational, educational, and recreational needs of the citizens of Hillsdale," the library offers an amazing array of programs, materials, and services for patrons of all ages, always alert and adaptive to the needs of a changing community. Auto-Graphics' VERSO® helps Hillsdale fulfill their library mission statement daily by providing a technology platform that can adapt to the changing needs of the library.



With nearly 40 years of experience in library service, Hill has worked with many library automation companies. "I look at your competitive products which are 2 - 3 times as much as the VERSO Express SaaS subscription, and have realized that VERSO Express has the same functionality and is actually a lot more user-friendly," Hill says. She thinks VERSO Express would be fine for any small library that wants the same automated operational functionality as a much larger library. "VERSO Express is very intuitive and has a phenomenal price point."

Hillsdale Community Library operates with a staff of seven, including the director, Mary Hill. Most recent statistics cite annual circulation of nearly 60,000 with 26,000 virtual visits to the library's website. Circulation of children's material was 18,000, and 11,000 eBooks were accessed. The library hosted more than 200 events that drew 4500 guests for events such as knitting classes, yoga classes and book signings in 2017. Auto-Graphics' library automation solution, VERSO Express, helps make it all possible on a tight budget.

VERSO Support

The Hillsdale Community Library implemented the VERSO Express integrated library management system in August of 2014. Mary Hill arrived in 2017. Stating her appreciation for the value offered by VERSO as well as the Auto-Graphics customer support service, Hill says "I am new to VERSO Express, but I am pleased with the help you provide. I have worked with other vendors and deeply appreciate the one-on-one attention Auto-Graphics provides. I feel I can always ask a question and get a prompt reply, which helps me do a better job."

User-Friendly and Intuitive Circulation

Hill cites the user-friendliness she enjoys with VERSO Express by describing a typical library task with another system provider. "With [the other provider] at the circulation desk when you are putting in somebody's name, you have to press an 'n' first. It's like when we first started using computers and we had to use the old key-stroke commands like

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control P to tell the computer what we were doing. In some ways, they are still using those old signals to tell the computer 'we're looking up a name now.' It's cumbersome for the user. That's just an example of some of the things that I found less intuitive. With VERSO Express, all I have to do is type part of a name and I get a list to choose from. Another thing, if I wanted to search the collection for items that hadn't circulated in five years, it was so complicated that I had to have my tech person come and set that up for me every single time because I couldn't figure it out. Now I'm a fairly intelligent person. I found it very hard to use," Hill says. With VERSO Express, all Hill has to do is run the Item Circulation Report to get a list of what items have circulated how many of times in a given time period.

"On the other hand, at the circulation desk with VERSO Express," she says, "I like the way that when you put in a last name it brings up the whole list of people in alphabetical order. It's easy to find people. I don't have to search to find my patrons. Of course, you have to have staff who put things in accurately, but I like the way the screen looks. It's very clean-looking. I think Auto-Graphics put a lot of thought into making VERSO Express very intuitive."

Copy Cataloging

Hill also appreciates the copy cataloging features of VERSO Express. "I'm not a cataloguer," she says. "With VERSO Express, cataloging is very intuitive. It's very user-friendly. It's not anything I had to sit up nights thinking about. I wouldn't say I'm a cataloguer, but I certainly do a lot of it and it's been okay. Auto-Graphics has made cataloging very user-friendly and very intuitive. I think that's the thing I like most about VERSO Express. It's very intuitive."

To do copy cataloging efficiently, Mary and her staff set up some Z39.50 library targets to use as cataloging resources (see sample cataloging resources image). Then, when cataloging, Mary chooses her target(s), searches for, identifies, and selects the best record to copy. She clicks 'Edit Bib Record', which opens that record in the VERSO MARC record editor. At that point, she makes local changes to the MARC record, adds item holdings, and saves the record to the Hillsdale database.

- ▼ Cataloging Resources
- Library of Congress (direct)
- Metro Boston Library Network
- OCLC WorldCat
- Prez Authority DB
- Seattle Public Library

Quick and Easy Access Due to Millennial-Friendly Responsive Design

One of Mary Hill's first projects when she came to Hillsdale was to redo the library Website so it would be phone-friendly. "I find that millennials don't have patience with anything they can't do on their phone," she says. She appreciates that her responsive VERSO Express solution provides a good mobile and website interface. "Library patrons can look things up from their devices easily," she says. "What we own is pretty transparent. It's out there. If they need something for homework, they can go on our website or they can go on their phone and access our website to be able to see if we have that book on the shelf."

Fundraising

When asked what Auto-Graphics could do to assist with their fundraising efforts, Hill asked if it would be possible to use check-out receipts to create coupons or special offers. "Maybe we could print a notice at the bottom of the receipt—like sign-ups for summer reading or 'you're the 1500th person to come through the door and you've won a prize,'" she said.

VERSO offers several approaches to help solve the library's most pressing concern: Funding

According to VERSO product manager Ted Koppel, VERSO Express offers several approaches to help solve the library's most pressing concern: funding. Hill could create a - "Sponsors" or "Friends of the Library" widget, put the logos of sponsoring businesses in the widget, and display that widget on their library splash page. "VERSO Express has a value calculation on the check-out receipt which can print the dollar value of what was just checked out along with a message from the library. But it doesn't have to be used that way - the library can use that space on the receipt for marketing events and programs at the library, or they can use that space to help local businesses who are 'friends of the library' market their businesses," states Koppel. "As an example, the library could ask a local business for a weekly donation and print "show this receipt at our 'friend of the library' for 10% off." The library could also use rolls of thermal receipt paper that are pre-printed with local advertising. Local businesses could be asked to make a donation of \$100 for a preprinted inch, 2 inches for \$200, for instance.



The intuitive user interface, copy cataloging, and easy to use circulation module provided by VERSO Express enables Hill to work in a more agile fashion. "Today's libraries are being asked, 'are you relevant in the 21st century?' I think we are," Hill says, "but we have to adapt to the people who are coming up. I don't think that it's their responsibility to adapt to us. One of the questions that came up at the Kiwanis meeting I attended was 'do we really need libraries when we have everything on the Internet?'" Hill notes that libraries have to change to be part of the 21st century and one way of changing is to become community centers.

The fundraising done by Hill enables the library to provide the programs and materials - both physical books and eBooks, to satisfy community needs, with the ease of use of VERSO Express helping to tie it altogether. "We need to offer programs, we need to be relevant," she says. "People are not just going to read books or do homework here. We have the gamut of people coming through our doors. We have homeless here. We have caseworkers doing evaluations with young parents and their children in our early literacy area. We have to be relevant to all of them and to provide a safe environment. We offer things you traditionally think of with libraries like book clubs and other things you don't think of traditionally like yoga classes. I love the fact that libraries attract more people than any other public institution with the exception of Walmart!" Hill says, "This really hammers home the power of public libraries in today's democracy. We are doing important and powerful work and changing the lives of many people!"

VERSO Express has been the ILS of choice for Hillsdale Community Library since 2014 due to the circulation being user-friendly with an intuitive user interface, easy copy cataloging, responsive design, and ability to help with fundraising.



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