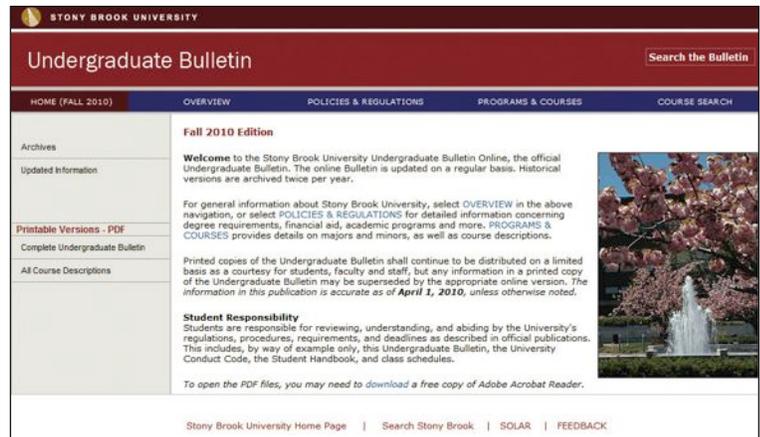


Case Study

Stony Brook University Goes Green and Cuts Costs with Its Online Catalog

Key Takeaways:

- Online course catalogs help support higher education sustainability initiatives and legally imposed accessibility requirements
- When institutions are faced with budget cuts, online course catalogs keep budgets down by significantly reducing printing costs
- Online course catalogs integrated with a web content management system help eliminate maintenance problems and reduce drain on staff resources



One of the top public schools in the nation, Stony Brook University enrolls nearly 25,000 undergraduates annually. Established in 1957, Stony Brook has carried out the mandate given by the New York State Board of Regents in 1960 to become a university that would “stand with the finest in the country.”

Course Catalog Conundrum

Despite its status as an elite institution, Stony Brook was challenged with a hardship. The university's Office of Communications (OOC) struggled with two time-consuming undergraduate course catalogs. The university had a print catalog that was out of date by the time it reached the printer and cost thousands of dollars to produce, and an online version that contained hundreds of PDF files, each needing to be entirely rewritten or redlined to stay current.

Historically, Stony Brook University printed a 500-plus page undergraduate course catalog every two years. The online version of the catalog consisted of multi-page sections of PDFs that were produced in Quark and contained information on more than 130 programs and more than 2,200 courses. To update the online catalog each semester, the OOC had to publish new PDFs with red text and strikethroughs. The online catalog wasn't user-friendly and was not accessible to screen readers. In addition, departments could not simply link to the online catalog. Instead, the department staff had to maintain their own running list of courses on the departmental pages. By 2008, those in charge of maintaining and producing the catalog recognized the need for a more efficient system.

Hard Hit to the Bottom Line

Stony Brook invested thousands of dollars to publish each course catalog. Since 2003, four editions had been printed at a total cost of more than \$191,000. In an initial effort to reduce costs, the OOC reduced the number of copies printed for each edition. For the 2007 edition, 31,000 copies were printed, yet 10,000 copies were left unused. This represented a significant waste in funds, which was in conflict with the directive given by the State University of New York system to cut spending wherever possible. Additionally, the leftover copies were in opposition to the university's green initiative. Despite a downward trend, publishing 50,000 copies of the undergraduate catalog in 2003 and only 16,000 copies in 2009, this print process was wasteful.

Since 2003, four editions of the catalog had been printed at a total cost of \$191,000+... a significant waste in funds.

Stony Brook wanted to get away from PDFs and cease managing the catalog in Quark. The goal was to improve the user experience and make content management easier. Managing the hundreds of PDF files was a daunting task and represented a significant drain on resources in the form of man-work hours.

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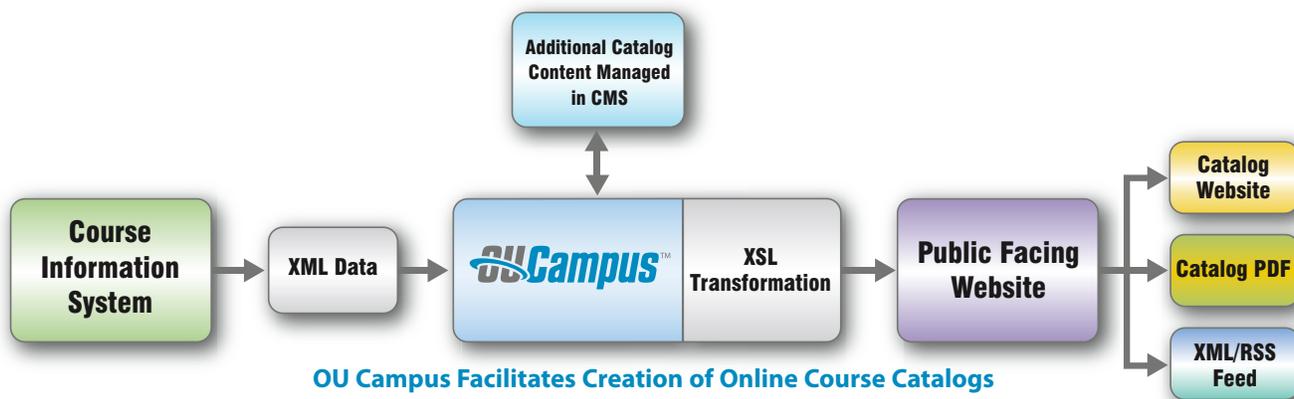
Web CMS to the Rescue

Faced with budget cuts, a desire for sustainability, and the need to satisfy legal accessibility requirements, Stony Brook turned to OmniUpdate, with whom they had an existing relationship. Stony Brook was already using OmniUpdate's OU Campus™ web content management system (CMS) to manage the institution's website. So they worked with OmniUpdate to develop an economical and easy-to-use online course catalog using OU Campus. To get the project rolling, Stony Brook had to complete the following:

- Identify the data elements needed from their course information system
- Export data as XML with content
- Identify additional static content
- Create a site structure and templates
- Auto import the data source

With this information, OmniUpdate worked with the institution to develop a catalog that fit their specific needs, including template designs, tagging, printing, searching, and archiving. Once migration and implementation were complete, Stony Brook was able to manage the course catalog within OU Campus instead of Quark.

Today, course and program information is maintained in PeopleSoft, while the rest of the catalog (overview, policies and procedures, etc.) is maintained in OU Campus. Stony Brook exports the course data as XML and the course information displays dynamically (see figure below). This allows for catalog sections to be printed as PDFs, but with better online usability. With content truly being separated from design (more than with HTML and CSS), it allows the OOC to produce better PDFs of the content. Also, it is easy to archive each edition of the catalog. Updated course information is imported into the CMS on a scheduled basis. The result is a regularly refreshed and up-to-date student catalog that can be viewed, printed, and archived as necessary.



An Economical, Sustainable, and Accessible Solution

As a result of the transition to a fully online course catalog, Stony Brook University will save more than \$100,000 in printing costs over the next few years. This estimate does not include the additional cost savings realized by reducing the hundreds of staff hours spent by writers, designers, administrators, and faculty attempting to maintain a print catalog. The easier to maintain course catalog also may be published more frequently, and departments are able to link to the catalog for course information rather than maintain it themselves.

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Notably, the user experience greatly improved with easier accessibility and the addition of a "Course Search" option, where the user can enter keywords or a course designator to find course information. Also, Stony Brook recognized the added benefit of being able to update additional catalogs (i.e., Graduate, Health Sciences Center, and Professional Development) due to easier online management and more free man-work hours.

Michael Gasparino, Web Content Manager for the OOC, explained why OmniUpdate was the right choice for Stony Brook University: "OmniUpdate has reliable service and support, and OU Campus is easy to use." He believes OmniUpdate's Software-as-a-Service solution fits higher education needs particularly well. The switch to a CMS fulfilled the goals of the Stony Brook OOC by reducing costs, helping the sustainability initiative, and making the online course catalog more accessible.