Winning the Hearts and Minds of College Faculty in the Digital Era

Providing academics a cost-effective platform to improve personal web presence, publish research and manage content at lower cost.

Digital solutions are remaking many industries, and universities must quickly adapt to transform user experience and improve institutional efficacy. One area ripe for change is content management systems (CMS). Higher education institutions need to provide faculty, researchers and academic departments an efficient, cost-effective way to elevate their online profile, promote research and manage content more effectively while keeping rising IT costs under control.

Too often, college websites used by academics lack critical content management functionality, look dated, and don’t show well in the scholastic world. While options exist to use general website platforms, they are not designed to meet the unique needs of scholars. Alternatively, academics can hire a web developer to custom-create a website using available CMS platforms, but for most colleges this is cost prohibitive.

Working with academics from a leading Ivy League University, OpenScholar® - a content management system designed expressly for academia - was created with the mission to build an affordable, highly scalable, pre-built, digitally efficient and scholar-centric platform for higher education.

AT A GLANCE

Improving institutional efficacy is a top goal for higher education. So is offering ways for faculty, researchers and departments to share and publish scholarly research that enhances their own visibility in academic circles, and also advances the brand of the university. Having an easy-to-use content management system that meets requirements of academics and IT departments while delivering consistent online presence are critical success factors. OpenScholar’s content management platform addresses these needs.

OUTCOMES

• Delivered a modern, simple, robust content management system to a leading Ivy League University that made it easy for departments to create their own web pages and ensure consistent brand experience across web properties.

• Reduced support time by more than 30% by eliminating random websites.

• Lowered IT costs by +$100MM over nine years.

• Increased citations and online visibility of faculty, department and graduate student research.

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Starting in 2009, OpenScholar began an iterative process to create a robust web platform built for academics by academics, drawing upon the feedback of end users to ensure meeting needed requirements.

The OpenScholar platform addresses three critical needs of higher education:

1. **Websites Designed for Research-Centric Usage, Right Out of the Box:** In the case of the Ivy League University, its existing website platform was outdated, expensive to maintain, and did not meet the needs of the faculty or departments. Features tied to publications, bibliography, taxonomy and faceted search all required expensive plugins or an IT-developed custom application. There was no affordable, all-in-one solution in the marketplace.

2. **Affordable Scalability:** Website demand outpaced the IT department's time and budget required to support it. The IT cost burden was compounded by multiple, internally redundant website platforms. The system could not scale to meet demand, from either an IT-resource or cost standpoint.

3. **Websites that Strengthen the Institution's Online Brand:** Websites across the Ivy League University were aesthetically and thematically inconsistent; the branding was incoherent and weak. At the same time, increasing numbers of prospective students were researching the university via the school's website. Improving online branding was an essential part of attracting applicants and engaging alumni.

In late 2017, OpenScholar spun out of a leading Ivy League University to make its platform available to all higher education institutions. As an independent company, OpenScholar LLC can address the market demand by offering its content management system as a software-as-a-service (SaaS) platform.

OpenScholar worked with Cognizant as its strategy and technical partner in its transition into an independently operational business. Our education sector expertise coupled with interactive and technical know-how were instrumental in helping transform the CMS into an enterprise grade platform that could meet the most stringent demands of end users. Our capabilities in software development, feature refinement and enhancements, quality testing, delivery and customer support during the pilot phase were important contributors to the platform's success.

Built on Drupal, OpenScholar end users typically need no programming knowledge while creating and publishing content. The OpenScholar platform features:

- Indefinite scalability – an unlimited number of websites can run on one license affordably.
- Tailored functionality – meeting the needs of universities and faculty, and continually refining and improving by feedback from the Ivy League University's 17,000 OpenScholar website users.
- Research and publication-centric platform – automatically pushes research to the correct scholarly repositories, like Google Scholar or PubMed; tags research for easy discoverability.
- Multiple themes/layout designs – allows academics to optimize the presentation of information and streamline school branding.
- Drag and drop – simple, do-it-yourself templates that make set up quick and easy.

For more information, visit: [https://www.cognizant.com/education-technology-solutions](https://www.cognizant.com/education-technology-solutions)

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