

## How One Library Modernized its Digital Presence with Communico

Prince George's County Memorial Library System (PGCMLS) serves the culturally, economically, and socially diverse population of the second largest county in Maryland. The population of more than 900,000 residents includes a majority of African-Americans and new immigrants as well as government employees who work in the District of Columbia.

PGCMLS—with nineteen branch locations—enjoys a high level of community support, which has enabled the library to undertake an aggressive building program to replace and build new branches. It is the first library system in the state to have formed an agreement with local schools to make it easy for students to access the resources of the public library by using their school IDs as their library cards.

### The Challenge: Managing Systems That Didn't Talk to Each Other

Michael Gannon, interim co-CEO, wanted to address the difficulties the library was experiencing in providing a modernized digital experience for patrons. His concerns pertained to four areas:

- Website
- Mobile app
- Digital signage
- Events management and meeting room reservations

“Our community didn't know who we are or what we offered.”



PGCMLS was relying on a different system to manage each of these channels. This meant updating each individually whenever there was new information, such as a change in branch hours or a new initiative to promote. However, they were difficult or time intensive to use which resulted in updates not being made timely. Information was sometimes dated or conflicted between one channel and the next, and rooms were at risk of being double-booked. It didn't help matters that the website and mobile app were clunky and not particularly user friendly for patrons.

The library had opted not to brand their patron app because doing so was expensive, however there was an opportunity cost to that decision. “Our brand is very important; our customers were confused when they went to download it from the app store because there was nothing to tell them it was the PGCMLS app,” said Gannon.

The app wasn't the only communications channel impacted by budget. The library's initial foray into digital signage had been limited by requirements to invest in a special server with a separate maintenance contract for each branch. Additionally, each branch had a separate contract with renewals coming up at different times, creating a paperwork nightmare.

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## The Solution: Centralizing Management With Seamless Integration of Tools

Gannon says his introduction to Communico came at the right time for the library. With Communico, he says all the services that were previously managed in their own silos are now controlled in one central place—the Communico Control Panel. All the pieces are fully integrated which means staff can change something in the Control Panel and everything updates—the website, the mobile app, and the digital signs in the branches, as well as events and room reservation information.

As Gannon says, “I can put the message up quickly and easily right from my phone. And because everything is integrated, that message updates all our public-facing communication channels at the same time”.

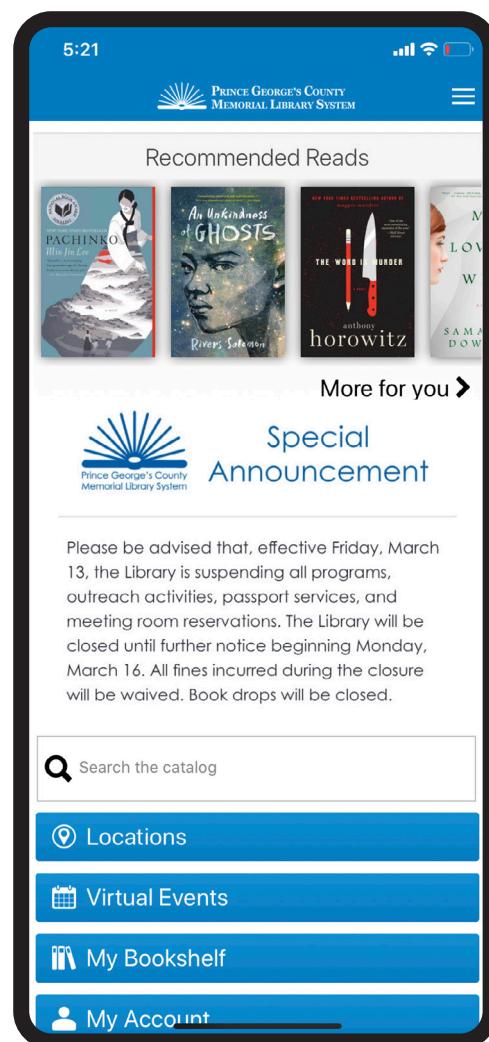
### A Fresh, Professional Looking Website That is Easy to Maintain

PGCMLS re-built their website using Create, Communico’s CMS. The tool’s WYSIWYG editor meant no coding expertise was required to create the site and maintenance is a breeze. “Before, we struggled to keep our content current because so few staff could change anything” said Gannon. “Now, although we like to update the site centrally, we can set permissions for departments and staff to change certain areas themselves.”

Although a crisp, clean design and ease of use was their primary concern, PGCMLS also appreciated that their new website is cloud-based. It has eliminated the need to maintain a dedicated server or the scramble that would happen whenever it would go down, taking their website offline.

### A Powerful App With a Look and Feel Consistent to the Website

The Communico team built PGCMLS an app that uses the branding and logo patrons are accustomed to seeing on the library’s website and social media channels. It lets them do many of the same things they do online too, such as review their account and request materials. Gannon loves that patrons can also store their library card details and access digital materials. “Without leaving the library app they can read an eBook or a magazine and listen to music or an audiobook”.



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## Digital Signage for a Fraction of the Cost

No longer constrained by expensive hardware and maintenance costs, PGCMLS expanded the amount of signage within branches. Their connectivity to the Control Panel makes updating information simple. Said Gannon, “For the cost of a TV and an Android box we can have as many signs in a library as we want. And because the signs are controlled centrally, we can change the messages easily and customize them by location”.

“Communico connects our customers to the library in ways our previous app didn’t. It truly lets us take the library to our public, rather than making our public come to the library.”

## Improved Calendaring and Room Management

Integrating the events and room booking tools means PGCMLS doesn’t have to worry about double-booking space. Staff love that adding an event in Control Panel means the room is reserved in both tools. And while e-commerce wasn’t originally part of the Reserve module, Gannon appreciated that Communico was willing to develop it. “They knew it was important to us. It was a great experience working with them to be a beta site to help add this functionality to their meeting room module. Reserve is intuitive to use and updates quickly, meeting the needs of our public and our staff”.

## The Results: A Better Public Image, For Less

With Communico in place, Gannon says the library is “Cutting edge. We are now what our customers expect”. The ability to easily update information keeps their digital channels fresh and creates a sense of excitement around what is happening at the library.

Integrated, easy to use tools also mean the library can more effectively use staff resources. Gannon considers it a fact of life that the library generally hires staff with beginner-level technology skills. But as he puts it, Communico is so easy that “If they (staff) can use one module, they can use them all, reducing training time”. When it comes to day-to-day use of the modules, he says “Staff spends a minimum of time updating digital channels so they can spend time on other projects like enhancing our social media presence with new content.”

Reduced overhead is not limited to daily usage. Without multiple vendors to manage, the administrative headache that comes from managing multiple contracts has been eliminated. And there have been other cost benefits: Since Communico’s digital signage module, Broadcast, is hardware agnostic the library has been able to choose whichever devices suit their budget and use case. No longer needing a special server, expensive media boxes or pricey annual maintenance contracts has given the library greater flexibility to decide when and where signage is added. When it came time to build their new central library, they added six digital signs – something they wouldn’t have been able to do with the old system.

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Perhaps most importantly, Gannon views Communico as a partner committed to growing with PGCMLS. “They want to deliver a good product and to do this they ask what we want. Working with Communico we get what we want and have an opportunity to help make the product better as features we request are rolled into the product.”

### Find Out How Communico Can Help Your library.

Communico is an integrated suite of cloud applications built specifically for public libraries so they may better reach patrons, connect with them and grow their usage. Launched in the UK in 2006, the company established its global headquarters in Stamford, CT in 2016. Contact us at [sales@communico.us](mailto:sales@communico.us) or visit [www.communico.us](http://www.communico.us) to learn more and request a demo.

