**CHALLENGES**

- Library users want to find what they need quickly, and would-be library users sometimes don’t want to, or don’t have time to, travel to the library’s physical location to get information.
- Librarians tasked with purchasing library resources can be hard-pressed to select materials that satisfy the needs of diverse user populations, particularly in the face of limited budgets.

**SOLUTIONS**

- Gale Virtual Reference Library (GVRL)

**RESULTS**

- GVRL’s friendly interface and sophisticated, yet easy-to-use search features (such as the autofill feature) allow patrons to find what they need quickly. GVRL offers users the convenience of accessing information at the main library, at branch locations, or from their home computers. Users can e-mail articles to themselves, too.
- Document translation features in GVRL allow the library to serve a larger and more diverse community that includes non-English-speaking patrons, who can have reference materials translated into their primary language.
- Gale’s deposit collection program allows libraries to “test-drive” and track usage of specific collections for six months prior to purchasing them, enabling targeted and efficient use of budget dollars while improving patrons’ user experience.

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**SUCCESS STORY**

**Sue Kovacs**

Reference Specialist, Aurora Public Library

**Aurora Public Library Encourages Staff and Patrons to “Think Gale”**

Public libraries play an important role in their communities, and they take their roles seriously. Case in point: Aurora Public Library (Aurora) in Illinois, which is dedicated to “supporting lifelong learning and access to information, knowledge, and ideas.” That’s no small task. Fortunately, the Gale Virtual Reference Library (GVRL) is front and center in helping Aurora achieve its goals — offering patrons easy, quick access to informational resources covering the spectrum of subject areas, even when they’re not at the library.

Reference Specialist Sue Kovacs runs two reference desks at the Aurora’s main branch, where she’s responsible for buying all reference materials and keeping them updated and relevant. When Sue began working at the library in 2009, she saw that community dynamics were changing. “Most people didn’t want to have to come downtown to look at a reference collection. I evaluated our Gale products as well as the available alternatives. I liked the Gale platform and products, which are excellent, so I committed to keeping GVRL and making it available to everybody at all of our branches as well as through remote access,” she says. “I don’t want people to have to wade through multiple different platforms to find digital book information.” So, whereas Gale was formerly one of many database products available at Aurora — it’s now the primary one. In fact, Sue rarely buys additional print references.

**GALE LETS AURORA “TEST DRIVE” RESOURCES**

The library serves a diverse user community, including large Hispanic and Hindi populations. “I do my best to determine the best new resources to purchase, but meeting the needs of everyone is quite a challenge,” says Sue. Recently, she found out about a Gale program that allows her to make the best possible use of her limited annual budget. “We put down a deposit and received six months of access to thousands of Gale products that weren’t in our standard collection, tracked usage statistics for six months, and then bought the materials that were most popular. We continued the program for another six months to test other resources. It takes the guesswork out of our decision-making process.”

Sue was surprised by the results, a testament to the program’s value. “The primary set of books that our customers were using was the American Law Encyclopedia. I now view it as essential to our collection. I also particularly like Gale’s vast biographical information, which I’ve beefed up in recent years, as well as its historical information, which doesn’t get out of date. Both collections are popular among students when they do reports.”

**CUSTOMERS APPRECIATE SEARCH AND TRANSLATION FEATURES**

GVRL is Sue’s “go to” resource for reasons other than its comprehensiveness. She also lauds its customer-friendly features. “Gale is very easy to use. The autofill feature makes
“Our users get the results they need without having to go through five or ten different databases trying to figure where to find the right information. I tell them... ‘For any kind of reference book you’re thinking of, think of Gale.’”

Sue Kovacs
Reference Specialist
Aurora Public Library

To learn more about this and other resources provided by Gale, visit: www.gale.cengage.com

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