

# Companies and Products

The world of the library engagement platform is quite diverse, making it difficult to pin down a name for this type of software platform. The term I'm using is *library engagement platform*. You'll also see these platforms called community engagement platforms, marketing platforms, or even patron engagement platforms.

Even though the names and the functionality of these platforms are different, all of them have one thing in common. Each one uses software to help library customers interact and engage with the library.

In this chapter, let's explore some of the software companies and their products. Full disclosure—my library (Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library) currently uses some of these products and has used some of them in the past. Also, this chapter is not a comprehensive list of all library engagement platforms and their product offerings, only the ones I am familiar with.

So, without further introduction, let's explore these companies and their products.

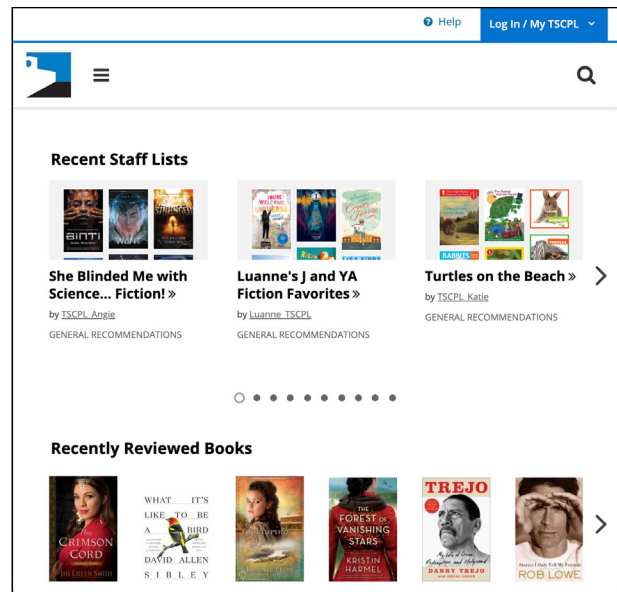
## BiblioCommons

Most librarians are familiar with BiblioCommons because of the BiblioCore discovery layer. BiblioCore is a web-based patron catalog interface (figure 2.1) that functions much better than similar modules from the ILS vendors.<sup>1</sup>

In recent years, BiblioCommons has created some software products that fit the category of library engagement platforms: BiblioEvents, BiblioApps, and BiblioEmail.

## BiblioEvents

Here's what BiblioCommons says about BiblioEvents: BiblioEvents is “an events calendar for public libraries



**Figure 2.1**  
Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library's BiblioCommons catalog

that works like the rest of the web. It's a patron-friendly, fully responsive and visually appealing way to manage and promote your library's programs and events."<sup>2</sup>

BiblioEvents offers a lot of features that draw people to a library's events, including online registration, search facets for narrowing down a list of events, social sharing to your customers' favorite social media platform, and a single sign-on between the catalog (i.e., BiblioCore) and BiblioEvents, which makes it easier to register for classes and events (assuming the patron is already logged in to the catalog). If you use the BiblioWeb product for your website CMS (content management system), BiblioEvents is easy to integrate across your whole website as well.

## BiblioApps

BiblioApps is BiblioCommons' mobile app. The app provides a one-stop shop for quickly finding things at your library. Assuming you have all of BiblioCommons' products, this app will easily find items in your library's catalog, upcoming classes and events, and information about library services from your website.

The app is focused on discovery, that is, on finding items in the library catalog. Discovery is a type of engagement in a library system. Because of that focus, BiblioCommons has built a powerful search feature into the mobile app. Here's what it says about search: "BiblioApps uses sophisticated facets to ensure that the most relevant results are at the top of every query, and follow [sic] FRBR best practices to bring forward every format your patrons might be interested in."<sup>3</sup>

The app also uses a smartphone's native functionality. For example, a user can add their library card barcode number to the app. Then, when users are ready to check something out, they can use their mobile app to scan their library card number instead of digging for their library card. You can also use the app's camera feature to scan barcodes of items.

## BiblioEmail

BiblioEmail is BiblioCommons' newest project, and it uses modern direct e-mail marketing techniques to engage with a library's customers. BiblioEmail allows you to create e-newsletters that can be sent to customers via an e-mail address. It also allows the library to send customers personalized e-mails based on their activity in the library catalog.

## Communico

Communico is similar to BiblioCommons in that it has a large suite of products that are integrated on the back end and serve a wide variety of purposes in a library setting.<sup>4</sup>

The modules that I'll look at for this report allow patrons to interact with the library in some way: Attend, Reserve, and Engage.

## Attend

Attend is Communico's event creation and management tool, built for managing a library's events. It performs all the usual event creation functionality, like setting up classes and events. It also provides customers a way to easily sign up for events using their library cards. Patrons can also share events they find interesting on social media and add a class or event reminder to their favorite online calendars.

## Reserve

Reserve works in conjunction with Attend to manage a library's meeting rooms and equipment. Using Reserve, library customers can make meeting room reservation requests using their library cards. Communico has created several default room layouts to make it easy for staff to manage. This also helps to make room reservation requests simple for the customer.

The Reserve module is fully integrated into Attend (mentioned above) as well as the Broadcast digital signage module. If you have all three modules, a meeting room booking can be approved, the event can show up on the library's meeting room calendar, and the event can appear on digital signage throughout the building, all from a single app.

## Engage

Engage is Communico's version of a mobile app for libraries (figure 2.2). Engage is available from the Google and Apple app stores and has a variety of functionality, including showing information from a library's website, sharing book lists, doing barcode scans, searching the catalog, putting items on hold, accessing upcoming library classes and events, and accessing a customer's account.

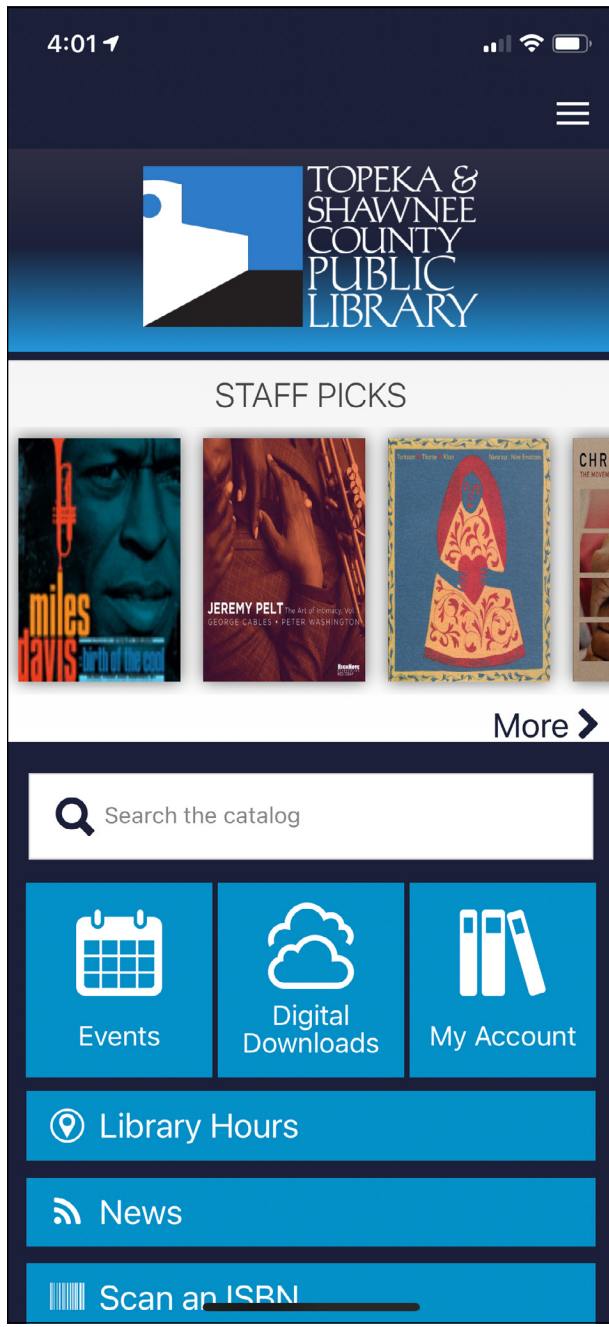
Engage is also where customers can schedule curbside appointments and curbside pickup. This functionality has been especially helpful during the current pandemic.

## Counting Opinions

Counting Opinions is focused on capturing data and feedback from your library customers.<sup>5</sup> Here's how the company describes itself: "Counting Opinions provides organizations with innovative, comprehensive, cost-effective ways to capture, manage and measure performance data, including open-ended customer feedback, qualitative and quantitative data, trends, benchmarks, outcomes and peer comparisons."<sup>6</sup>

As you can imagine, today's modern library needs to use data and customer feedback to inform the library about trends and to help improve processes, services, and functions. Counting Opinions has built tools to help make that process easy to manage by using data capture tools and services. These include LibPAS, a data management solution for libraries, and LibSat, which is described as a "continuous Customer Satisfaction and Feedback Management Solution."<sup>7</sup> In other words, LibSat captures feedback from customers.

InformUs is a web-based tool for creating and implementing forms and surveys and is an extension of the LibPAS and LibSat tools. It helps staff easily create drag-and-drop surveys and provides a simple way to collect feedback of many types.



**Figure 2.2**  
Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library’s mobile app using the Engage platform

## Demco Software

Demco, the library furniture company, has gotten into the software business in recent years.<sup>8</sup> I like its focus, which is stated on its website: awareness, engagement, and outcomes.

With the focus on impacts in mind, Demco has a couple of tools that can help with library customer engagement.

## SignUp

SignUp is Demco’s event management solution. It allows a library to promote events and allows patrons to register for events online. SignUp lets customers add library events to their personal calendars, and users can easily share events on their personal social media platforms, which is a great way to get customer-driven help in promoting events to a library’s community.

## Spaces + D!BS

Spaces + D!BS is Demco’s space and meeting room management software. It allows patrons to check the availability of rooms, see the details of the space, and book the room without the help of library staff.

Part of that platform is named D!BS. There’s a reason for that. The software is built to allow customers to “call dibs” on a room in a first-come, first-served manner without any staff mediation, which can save time for both staff and customers.

## LibraryAware

I really like the headline on LibraryAware’s website: “Expand your library’s reach.” LibraryAware’s platform includes newsletters, direct e-mails, and some marketing and promotion services.<sup>9</sup>

## NextReads Newsletters

NextReads e-newsletters are sent directly to a customer’s e-mail address and provide reading suggestions to subscribers. The nicest thing about these e-newsletters is that LibraryAware writes them, so you don’t have to.

Newsletters include annotations to books and links back to your library catalog, which makes it easy for customers to click through and put an item on hold. There are over twenty of these newsletters that are genre- and topic-focused, so it’s easy for customers to find something of interest.

## Targeted E-mails

LibraryAware also sends targeted e-mails that can be personalized to the library patron. For example, if you want to send an automatic welcome message to your new cardholders, LibraryAware can do that. The software also sends a library card renewal reminder before the patron’s library card expires.

Many professionally designed templates are available, so you don’t have to design anything. That’s a nice feature, since many libraries don’t have a full-time graphic designer.

## Marketing and Promotion Services

LibraryAware also offers some marketing- and promotion-focused services. The company has campaign guides and training that will give you a step-by-step guide to follow for a marketing campaign. Resource promotion kits are also available.

## Gale

Gale has two products that fit nicely into the library engagement platform sphere: Gale Engage and Gale Analytics.<sup>10</sup>

### Gale Engage

Gale Engage is described on Gale's website:

*Gale Engage* is a web-based solution designed to enhance your public library system's capabilities by centralizing data analysis and outreach. With the means for faster decision-making and more efficient marketing outreach, your library can increase its meaningful relationships with the community.<sup>11</sup>

Gale Engage allows you to add data from your library into the product. Once it is added, you can use the visual dashboard of your data to find trends and patterns that can help with strategic planning and other decisions and can help bring more data-driven value to your community.

This platform has several useful features, including these:

- *Data synthesis:* You can upload different types of data files from different vendors into one place. Customized scripts help move the raw data from an export file and onto the dashboard.
- *Dashboard:* You can view the data you just loaded using different types of graphs, charts, and other types of visualizations.
- *Patron groups:* You can create groups of patrons based on how they interact with library materials, services, and programs. This can help when you are focusing on smaller groups of your community.
- *E-mail targeting:* You can take those patron groups and export them into your e-mail system (like Mailchimp), so you can easily send targeted e-mail blasts to individual segmented groups of customers.
- *Social media management:* You can post to Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

Gale Engage also emphasizes privacy. The company encrypts all patron data going into its system.

## Gale Analytics

Gale Analytics is similar to Gale Engage, in that they both use data and analytics to help analyze what your library's customers are doing. The main difference is that Gale Analytics is using Experian's segmentation system, which places individual households into seventy-one profiles. These profiles help the library get a visual snapshot of its library customers and noncustomers based on demographic and lifestyle characteristics.

A dashboard is included with Gale Analytics as well. Gale is using the free version of Tableau, Tableau Reader, to segment a household's characteristics, including interest, income, technology use, and the presence of children, for example. There are census map overlays that can provide visual depictions of segmentation analytics.

### Tableau Reader

<https://www.tableau.com/products/reader>

## Innovative

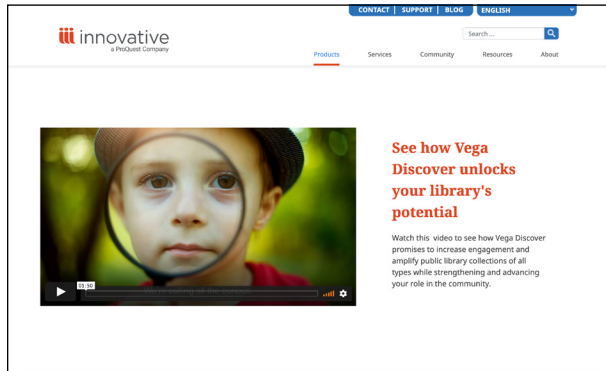
Innovative Interfaces, Inc. (shortened to Innovative) has a new product called Vega (figure 2.3), a platform that “promises to increase engagement and amplify public library collections of all types, helping strengthen a crucial part of communities across the world.”<sup>12</sup> That's a big promise!

Innovative is building products on top of the Vega platform. The first product is Vega Discover, a discovery layer that can be installed over an ILS. Vega Discover is built not only to get people to check out materials; it is built with patron engagement in mind. The product is still in its early stages, but the eventual plan is to include personalized experiences, including creating different types of lists, providing a reading history, and providing reading and viewing recommendations to customers.

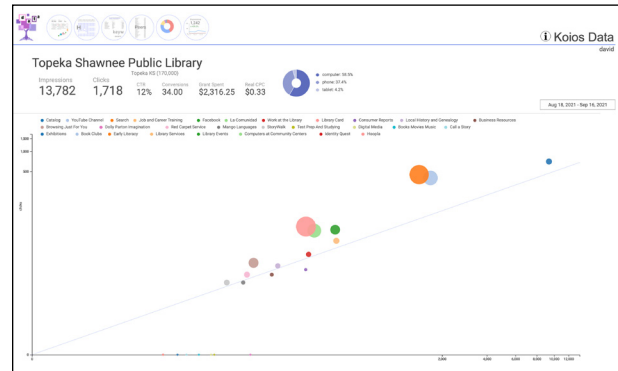
Vega also has a goal of making the process of placing an item on hold easier and making wait times transparent to the end user.

Visually, Vega Discover has a modern design with the goal to move the customer to quickly take action—that is, to check something out. This is the patron-facing goal of any good library catalog. So making the path from search to placing a hold as simple and seamless as possible is very helpful.

Innovative is planning to expand the Vega platform with other product offerings, including “intelligence, analytics, and public library marketing tools, and easily integrat[ing] data and third-party software. Marketing automation, [a] website builder, and event management will be part of Vega to strengthen



**Figure 2.3**  
Screenshot of Vega website



**Figure 2.4**  
Example of Koios reports

libraries' connections to communities.”<sup>13</sup>

I'm looking forward to seeing how the Vega platform expands.

## Koios

One way to engage library customers is to simply make sure you and your offerings can be discovered online. Enter Koios.<sup>14</sup> Specifically, Koios helps make your website and your library catalog discoverable by using Google Ads.

Koios manages Google's Ad Grants program, which provides up to \$10,000 a month in Google Ads for nonprofits (and libraries). Find out more about the Google Ad Grants program online.

### Google Ad Grants

<https://www.google.com/grants/>

Koios helps libraries by applying for the grant and setting it up for the library (figure 2.4). Once it's set up and activated, Koios manages changes to the ad grant program and manages Google Ads for your library.

You may wonder how Google Ads are related to library engagement platforms. It's a different way to think about “platform.” Google is one of the largest platforms in the online world. When your library has a Google Ad, you are placed at the top of the search results page via the ad. Any clicks on that ad move the person from Google to your website. That's called a click-through or a referral. Once they click, that person is now seeing your website and can find out more about the thing they found interesting enough to click. That's definitely an engaged person!

## Library Market

Library Market's mission “is to help libraries connect to their communities by offering superior marketing and technology products.”<sup>15</sup> The company does this by building websites for libraries and through a couple of software-based library engagement platforms and marketing services: LibraryCalendar and LibraryBrand.

### LibraryCalendar

As an aside, I love Library Market's simple and direct naming scheme. When a product is called “LibraryCalendar,” you know exactly what it is and who it's for!

LibraryCalendar manages events and rooms for libraries, with the goal of engaging your library's community through library programming. The system has a lot of features, including event and class setups, bookable equipment, and ILS registration options, so library patrons can register for events and reserve rooms using their library card. E-commerce solutions are also an option, so patrons can pay for room reservations if that's a requirement. Various reporting tools are available for staff.

### LibraryBrand

LibraryBrand is a unique service in the library world. This product is really a service that helps create a marketing strategy specifically tailored to your library—a valuable service!

As Library Market states,

A library's branding strategy patterns every interaction with patrons—it creates the visual language with which libraries communicate with their communities. Give the vision you have for the library a compelling and consistent design. Show your community that the library is a modern

and relevant institution that can provide value to their lives.<sup>16</sup>

LibraryBrand offers a range of focused marketing and branding services to public libraries, from creating a new library logo to working with a library to create a complete branding package.

Options include a logo package, an editorial style guide, branding guidelines, a marketing plan customized to your library, branding design, collateral inventory (figuring out everything that will need to be rebranded), design consultations, and an on-site evaluation.

## myLIBRO

myLIBRO builds mobile apps for libraries and includes the ability to use voice-activated, natural language searching. One of the company's goals is to provide conversational interaction in its mobile app.<sup>17</sup>

### myLIBRO 3.0

myLIBRO's main product is myLIBRO 3.0, which is a mobile app that connects patrons to a mobile version of your library catalog. The app provides recommendations for checkout, sends push notifications to help customers stay up to date with library events, and has a profile page for the library that includes location and open hours.

Because of COVID, the myLIBRO app has recently included self-checkout. Just scan the barcode, and you're all set. The app also allows scheduling for curbside pickup services.

### myLIBRO Insights

myLIBRO Insights offers a real-time dashboard for examining ILS analytics. These analytics can include information on checkouts, staffing hours, finances, inventory, and patron engagement.

## Capira

Next up we have a couple of products from OCLC. Capira has several mobile apps to help patrons engage with the library and the community.<sup>18</sup>

### CapiraMobile

CapiraMobile's goal is to let customers engage with the library from a mobile device. The app is customizable, so it can be branded with your library's look and feel and can offer specific information and categories that match your library and your community's needs.

This app also offers self-checkout, so customers can avoid library lines and the need to physically touch a library's self-check kiosk machines.

CapiraMobile sends notifications to customers using a smartphone's built-in notification feature. Notifications might come from an event sign-up, for example. The customers will receive a notification about the event so they don't forget to attend. The app is also connected to events and event registration, allowing customers to browse upcoming events and to register for events via the mobile app.

Notifications can also be used in case of an emergency. For example, a library can send a notification that the library is closed because of inclement weather.

### CapiraReady

If you don't want a fully customizable mobile app, choose CapiraReady, a predesigned, off-the-shelf mobile app. It's designed for easy setup and provides functionality like catalog searching, the option to use a digital library card, and a quick way to view an events calendar.

### CapiraCurbside

CapiraCurbside is OCLC's version of a curbside pickup app. It provides a mobile app-based way to pick up library materials without having to enter the library building. The app allows customers to schedule their materials pickup time and will give library staff instructions on where to put the items for the customer (e.g., in the trunk or the back seat of the car). It also sends reminders via notifications when items are ready to be picked up.

### LendingKey and MuseumKey

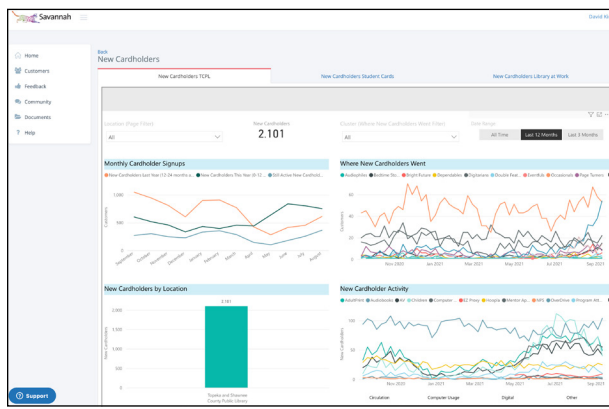
LendingKey and MuseumKey both provide a way for customers to check out nontraditional items. LendingKey focuses on physical items that can be checked out, like video cameras or cameras, sports equipment, or ukuleles.

MuseumKey is designed to provide passes to other community destination sites, like a museum or a children's discovery center. The process of checking out passes can be a bit clunky. MuseumKey can smooth that process for customers and staff.

## OCLC Wise

OCLC calls OCLC Wise a community engagement system. It's a modern library catalog system with customer engagement built into the platform.<sup>19</sup>

Most ILSs capture customer data, but OCLC Wise



**Figure 2.5**  
Example of Savannah dashboard

wants to help libraries use that data to engage with customers in new ways.

For example, OCLC Wise includes a way to build targeted mailing lists from customer information. A library can create an e-mail newsletter and send it to that list. These personalized e-mails can be created on the fly, or they can be scheduled campaigns.

You can also create personalized birthday messages for customers. These personalized messages can also be collection-focused and provide reading suggestions based on past checkout activity.

OCLC Wise also helps a library keep track of the collection by providing analytics on usage data, and scheduled reporting can help libraries evaluate the collection based on what customers check out.

## OrangeBoy

The uniquely named OrangeBoy (inspired by the owner's orange cat) has created a useful product to track community analytics and improve the community.<sup>20</sup>

OrangeBoy's main product is Savannah (figure 2.5), a web-based analytics and trends dashboard. According to OrangeBoy, Savannah is "a cloud-based community engagement platform backed by market leading analytics and a team of dedicated, experienced professionals that is designed exclusively to help you connect with your community in new, meaningful ways."<sup>21</sup>

Using Savannah, you can add library statistics that can be tracked over time. Savannah combines those analytics with "customer segmentation, performance reports, targeted marketing, NPS feedback, incident management, fundraising management, Market Watch, GIS mapping capabilities."<sup>22</sup>

The ability to examine local GIS data and market segmentation data provides your library with the analytics it needs for all types of data-informed planning.

Savannah also has an e-mail component that

allows you to send targeted e-mails to all customers or to a smaller segment of customers.

OrangeBoy also does some consulting work and can help your library with strategic planning, marketing, and branding initiatives.

## Patron Point

Patron Point calls itself

a fully featured marketing automation platform, exclusively for public libraries, that connects with your ILS and other data, allowing you to segment your patrons in any number of ways based on data and harness the power of automation in your day-to-day customer messaging.<sup>23</sup>

Patron Point includes these features:

- *E-mail automation:* You can create regular, automated e-mail messages that can be sent with customized content.
- *Web forms:* Instead of using the form builder that comes with your website's CMS (content management system), you can use Patron Point's web form builder. The benefit to using Patron Point's web forms is that the data collected can be seen on its data dashboard.
- *Landing pages:* You can build landing pages for different services or offerings that need a special web page.
- *Lists:* You can build a variety of distribution lists for your e-mail campaigns.
- *Multichannel communication:* You aren't limited to e-mail. You can also communicate via SMS text message or by the information on web pages.
- *Dashboard:* Patron Point comes with a customizable dashboard that displays a variety of real-time analytics in a graphical format.
- *E-mail insights:* All those e-mails you send out have analytics behind them as well. E-mail tracking, reporting, and analysis are provided.
- *Visitor insights:* These include normal website analytics like page views and traffic sources.
- *Patron Point Verify:* This is a way to verify if the people asking for library cards live in your service area. This verification process can speed up the process of getting library cards to new patrons.

## PolicyMap

PolicyMap provides up-to-date community data, so you can make better strategic decisions. Data includes demographics like race and ethnicity, age and sex, disabilities, foreign-born populations, educational

attainment, family types, sources of income, workforce characteristics, and school performance. The company gets this data from national and regional sources.<sup>24</sup>

You can do quite a lot with this type of data. For example, you can create maps to visualize different aspects of your community; upload your own data, so you can overlay your goals with your community's demographics; and most importantly, use this data to help inform your strategic planning.

## SirsiDynix

SirsiDynix is known for its solid library ILSs. But it has a new product called Community Engagement Platform (or CEP). CEP combines some of the tools we have mentioned previously, like direct e-mail marketing, an events calendar, event registration and ticketing, and lists of customers based on demographics.<sup>25</sup>

I love that a couple of ILS companies (Innovative and SirsiDynix) are included in this list. It's nice to see these more traditional library technology vendors focusing on new ways to use their data and tools to help libraries engage with customers.

## Solus

Solus makes a couple of mobile apps and interactive signage, including The Library App. This mobile app's goal is to help libraries engage with customers by allowing them to browse the catalog and connect to family members within the app. Customers can customize the app to show the content that's most important to them, which is a nice feature. You can find nearby libraries using the app, which is useful in a multibranch library system. You can also download and stream e-content right from the app, instead of having to use a separate e-content mobile app like OverDrive's Libby app.<sup>26</sup>

## Springshare

Springshare has a couple of library engagement-focused apps:<sup>27</sup>

### LibAnswers +Social

LibAnswers +Social is a handy tool for handling the online version of your reference desk or call center. Using this tool, your library can answer questions asked through web-based chat, SMS text messages, e-mail, Twitter, and Facebook.

There is a ticketing system and an FAQ builder for library staff. The ticketing system is a great way to

keep track of questions, answers, and who answered them.

The +Social part of LibAnswers +Social is handy as well. This tool allows you to track activity in Twitter, Facebook, and Pinterest, so you can monitor and engage people with those three social media channels in one place. Responding to questions or even posting is handled the same way as answering a question in LibAnswers, so there is no need to learn multiple ways to answer questions.

### LibCal

LibCal is a web-based platform made to deal with your library's calendar needs. It has four modules: Rooms & Spaces, which lets users book meeting rooms; Equipment Reservations, which lets a customer check out equipment; Event Management, which addresses all aspects of your library's classes and events; and Appointment Schedulers, which makes it easy for customers to book appointments with staff.

### LibConnect

Springshare's LibCRM was recently reworked and renamed LibConnect. LibConnect is focused on patron engagement and e-mail marketing. Springshare combined its CRM product with an integrated e-mail marketing platform.

You can import user information from your ILS and other sources and then use this data to create profiles in LibConnect. LibConnect offers pre-built e-mail templates, a drag-and-drop editor, a free image library, and multi-device e-mail previewing.

### LibWizard

A more direct form of online interaction comes through surveys, quizzes, and tutorials. LibWizard helps build these feedback tools for your library.

### LibInsight

LibInsight is a one-stop shop for all library statistics and analytics. You can import data sets, including data from e-books, your ILS, other Springshare products, Google Analytics, and interlibrary loan products.

Once this information is imported into LibInsight, you can create reports and datasets, including your library's gate counts, budget analysis, circulation and acquisitions data, and E-content usage analytics.

## TLC

The Library Corporation, or TLC, has an interesting new product focused on social media called



SocialFlow. TLC partnered with SocialFlow to bring this product to the library community.<sup>28</sup>

SocialFlow is a social media management platform, similar to Hootsuite, Sprout Social, or Agorapulse. What's social media management? It's a way to easily keep track of your organization's social media platforms in one place. SocialFlow allows you to post and respond to comments in Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Pinterest.

You can use SocialFlow to monitor the real-time behavior of your followers, so you can know the best time to publish content by finding the most active times on each social media platform. You'll also get some great analytics to measure your effectiveness in social media and with user engagement.

## Coming Next

Next, let's explore the different types of functionalities you can expect from these types of products, and how you can put those functionalities to work to better engage with your library's customers.

## Notes

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