



Running a large undergraduate research symposium with the help of InfoReady



Sharon Parks, Director Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP)

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A case study interview with Sharon Parks, Director Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) and Jerry McMillan, UROP Advisor from University of California, Irvine.

CHALLENGE:

Jerry: “UCI UROP has been hosting an annual symposium where undergraduate researchers present their research for 30 years. This year, there were over 700 individual student projects involving 1,000 individual students with roughly 2,000 people attending the event.

The whole process of registering students for presentations, reviewing submissions, assigning all times and locations is a very complicated, very detailed process to manage.”

Sharon: “We had an older, homegrown application management system that our tech support team at UCI could no longer support. We had an in-house programmer that created all of this but who is no longer here. Tech support said, ‘we can’t support this. You need to find something else.’”

Jerry: “The other system was brilliantly designed in 2003. It was utterly personalized, customized for what we did. And in that regard, it was perfect. But it was built in 2003, which meant things have changed. We also had a change in personnel in our department. Because this was custom built for us, some of the knowledge of how to use that system was no longer around. So not only didn’t we have people to support it, but we weren’t even sure how to use all of the features. While it was amazing when it started, it had definitely reached the end of its usable shelf life. As Sharon alluded, we were in the phase of either trying to rebuild the whole thing from scratch, which would have been incredibly difficult, or find an existing platform onto which to try to build some or most of the functionality we’ve gotten used to using over the years.”

Sharon: “And so, our tech team vetted different products, and found some of our colleagues in the Office of Research were using InfoReady.”



SOLUTION: InfoReady

Sharon: “We were under pressure as we absolutely needed to have an application management system for our proposals. Because we had to shift away from this 20 plus year old system (at the time it was 17 or 18 years old), we needed to have something in place in order to run our calls for proposals. We have three separate application processes, a fall call, a spring call, a summer call, and we couldn’t run those without something like InfoReady in place.

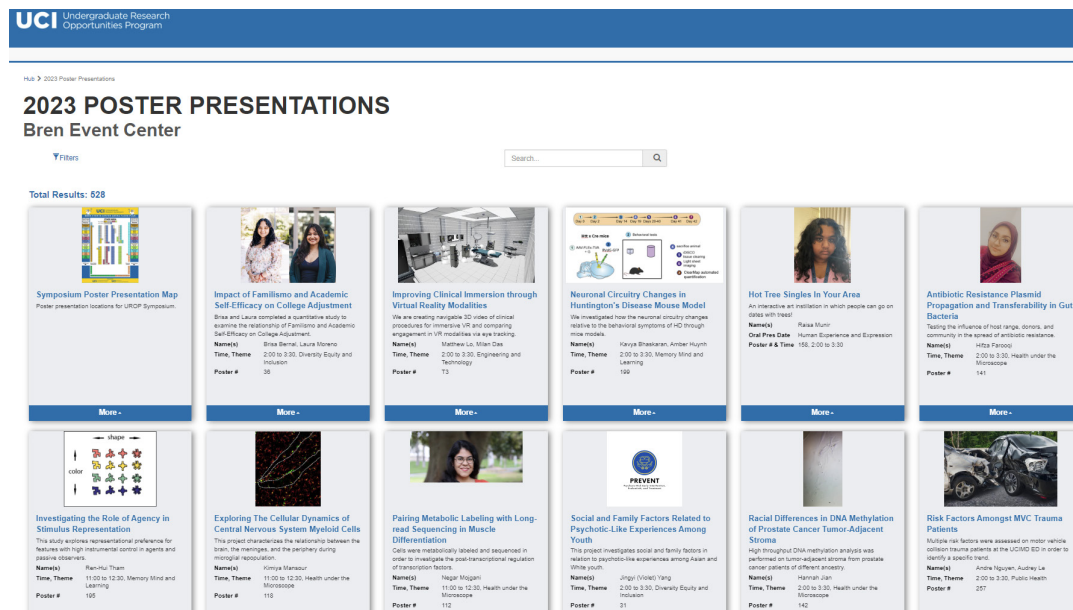
It was pretty seamless once we got through some growing pains in terms of getting everything built and learning how to use a new product. Once we had that in place, InfoReady allowed us to do a process that is central to our functioning, one of the main things we do.”

RESULTS:

Sharon: “We started using InfoReady for students to submit proposals to receive recognition and funding for their research. We send out an email to all of campus inviting any undergraduates doing research to register to present by a deadline. InfoReady was used to find out ‘Who wants to come? Who wants to present? Do they want to do a poster presentation? Would you like to do an oral presentation to be judged?’

Later in the process, we send out a progress report for the students to fine tune their proposal and to have them submit their assets.

When we learned about InfoReady’s Engagement Hub, we added that functionality to use with our symposium. Students upload their digital assets, their photos, their abstracts. We make our time assignments and the InfoReady team helped us



migrate all that data into Engagement Hub. **It really allowed us to put the icing on the cake.**

We could still have the symposium without Engagement Hub, but to be able to display all of the abstracts and profile pictures of all the students doing the projects and then their digital poster and their videos of their presentations. has been great for promoting the event. Students are able to show their parents and their friends and put on their CVs or resumes. It really added value to the symposium by giving us a real online presence.

We've just barely started to use Engagement Hub, and I can see our use expand as a showcase of all different types of undergraduate student research and opportunities. We already link to Handshake for student employment opportunities, but there's a lot more that we could do with it to highlight opportunities and to help connect students. Then we can use Engagement Hub to show to our corporate partners showcase what students are doing so they want to hire our students. There's a lot of potential there for using Engagement Hub."

CONCLUSION:

Sharon: "One of our favorite things about InfoReady is the excellent customer service. I remember early on we were working with Sarah Yecke. It was wonderful to be able to bounce ideas off of her and to have her really collaborate on how to develop the product. I wasn't completely left on my own to figure it all out. I could rely on her expertise in deciding which way to move forward on certain aspects, which was super invaluable.

Jerry: "I'd like to sort of dovetail on what Sharon said about how great the customer service has been. The fact that when things break, as they inevitably do when things are this big, InfoReady's folks have been amazing at helping us unbreak them.

But the other thing we haven't talked about is that we've been using it for long enough now that we share our wish lists with the product team. Obviously, something we suggest is not going to be built next week, but we do feel like our requests, our suggestions, and our recommendations are definitely heard. We've been able to watch InfoReady grow, and we definitely feel like some of the things we've raised have been heard and, even if not included, have been considered. In many ways, it's a lot easier for us to use InfoReady now than it was when we started, because we've been part of that design process. And that's been a really good part of the relationship."

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