AppsAnywhere®

LABSTATS

Customer Spotlight

THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

Transforming the library into a vibrant learning space at the University of Utah

The library is the heart of the university at Utah, with the Marriott Library located in the center of the main campus. Its Knowledge Commons, a full floor computer lab and technology workspace welcomes 3,000-5,000 students daily. The space is now vibrant and jam-packed, following its transformation over the last few years to respond to students' changing needs.

Matt Irsik, Head of CPS at Marriott Library, shares the transformation journey and its wider impact on IT provision at the University of Utah.

Matt Irsik leads a team of seven full-time staff supporting more than 2,000 devices, and estimates that 3,000–5,000 students visit the library's computing and study spaces each day. LabStats gave the team evidence for decisions about that equipment, while AppsAnywhere helped it deliver software across the devices students were using.



Key outcomes at a glance

• 58% desktop lab reduction: downsized from 353 to 150 desktops after analytics revealed only 60–65% peak concurrency

• **100% device utilization:** replaced fixed desktops with an on-demand, 60-day laptop loaner fleet matching student preferences

• **$70,000 study space reinvestment:** repurposed cleared lab space into collaborative areas and 20 glass study rooms.

• **$7k–$10k annual software savings** (one example): consolidated 3 text analysis tools into 1 application, based on usage data

• **Saved “days and days" of packaging:** by using pre-packaged AppsAnywhere applications like AutoCAD and automating deployment and applying updates remotely

• **Virtually zero support tickets or complaints:** Maintained massive operational scale with 7 staff supporting 2,000+ devices and 3,000-5,000 daily students

A library remodeled around student demand

The demand for group study space had been growing for years, alongside changes in how students completed their coursework. Instructors who once brought 45 students into a lab to learn Photoshop are now assigning exercises through Canvas, leaving students to complete them on their own schedule.

This move to online and hybrid learning led to reduced desktop usage, even in busy periods, with LabStats data demonstrating peak concurrency of 60-65%. This evidence enabled Matt and his team to remove around 200 unused workstations (keeping 150 out of the 353 computers) and replace them with laptops.

Started in 2013 with 6 laptops bought with some leftover budget, the laptop loan program now includes 1,350 laptops (down from 2,000 during COVID) and 200 iPads. The hub checks out cameras, graphic tablets, cables, chargers, adapters, voice recorders, and even calculators.

The library also invested approximately $70,000 in modular furniture and movable tables, creating more open spaces and group study rooms that accommodate as many as 12–15 students.

Software access beyond the library

The laptops run academic applications through AppsAnywhere, allowing students to use the new study areas, and indeed the whole campus, for their coursework. It’s no surprise that the 60-day loan program is highly popular, with 100% of laptops being checked out most of the time.

That reach proved especially important during the pandemic, when the university shipped laptops to students across the country. AppsAnywhere enabled the team to continue delivering software and updates while the devices remained with students.

"AppsAnywhere is a very powerful part of our laptop program [...] it allowed us to offer software packages to students pretty much all over the country and push out updates without having to bring the systems in" Matt said.

Applications are delivered on demand, so the team can offer complex software without installing every package in full on every device. Students select an application, which starts and loads further components as needed, reducing the storage required for a large locally installed catalog.



Maximum use, minimum complaints

Given the heavy footfall in the Knowledge Commons, Matt expected around 20-30 complaints per day, but in practice IT rarely gets any complaints or technical issues at all. The few tickets received are typically minor requests for specific application add-ons or plugins rather than support issues.

This low support footprint is credited to:

• AppsAnywhere's self-service portal that delivers applications on demand, without the normal issues of failed installs due to low disk space, permissions or compatibility.

• A well-maintained standardized software catalog containing virtually every core software title required across campus. If it's supported, it's in AppsAnywhere.

• Browser-based coursework through Canvas, which also integrates with AppsAnywhere, minimizing client-side software conflicts.

For a team of seven, managing 2,000 devices and hundreds of applications, the AppsAnywhere LabStats partnership adds another layer of support. The pre-packaged applications and the packaging subscription service help them save "days and days and days" of work, especially on heavy engineering packages like AutoCAD.

"Between the packaging service and seeing the lab stats, that has really transformed our services. Supporting 2,000+ systems with only 7 full-time staff, we rarely get any support complaints or tickets at all."





Evidence-informed investment in the library

Within the library, LabStats data is helping the team match hardware specifications to students' actual needs, in addition to the savings already realized through removing unused desktops. Rather than replacing expensive, high-performance computers costing around $3,000 each with similarly powerful models, the team can choose less expensive configurations where usage supports it. When LabStats reports showed that much of the everyday activity involved Office applications, browsers and tools such as Photoshop, the expense couldn't be justified. This "good enough is good enough" approach will continue to guide future hardware replacements.

"LabStats is probably one of the most sobering programs you could ever look at … it's going to tell you the truth about what is really happening out there."

Software renewals are also reviewed against demand. As part of his annual funding proposal, Matt evaluates around 200 titles, approximately 50–60 of which require funding. Nothing gets funded unless it gets used, especially as license costs keep rising.

Extending evidence-informed decisions across the university

The evidence used to reshape the library's services is also informing technology funding across the university. Through the Learning Spaces–Student Computing Fee process, colleges, libraries and centers apply for student technology funding. Proposals are reviewed by an IT taskforce and the Teaching and Learning Portfolio before budget approval.

Applicants seeking funding for student computer labs must submit four LabStats reports: Usage History, Login Summary by Group, Unique Users and Peak Usage History. These show how existing computers are used, giving reviewers evidence to assess requests for more equipment and consider whether available capacity could meet the need.

Matt serves on the group reviewing proposals and has seen departments reconsider how they distribute computers across separate rooms. The reports help identify opportunities to consolidate underused equipment and direct funding towards more heavily used services. This reporting requirement applies specifically to departments requesting centrally managed student computing funds.

Software usage reports are not yet compulsory in the wider funding process outside the library service. Matt would like that requirement extended so that software license requests receive the same evidence-based assessment as computer labs.

With around 30 groups funding technology and software separately across campus, there are also opportunities to reduce duplicate purchasing and administration. Greater visibility is helping the university work more collaboratively to consolidate resources and avoid overpaying.

For example, the university saved an estimated $7,000–$10,000 a year by consolidating three applications three text analysis applications (NVivo, ATLAS.ti and MAXQDA) into one.

Where next?

Matt would like to continue to grow the loan laptop program. He believes a fleet of 3,000–3,500 laptops (more than double the current number) would also be fully borrowed. Expanding the program would require funding for both the devices and the staff to maintain them, but he sees no shortage of demand.

A more consolidated approach to campus computing is also on Matt's wish list for the future. Having used LabStats and AppsAnywhere with great success for many years now, he sees the potential a wider deployment could bring to the university, standardizing and elevating the student experience, reducing manual labor for staff and saving on hardware, software and lab spaces by matching IT provision to student demand.

Want to see how AppsAnywhere and LabStats could help your institution simplify software delivery, improve student access, and make better use of labs and licenses? Get in touch to explore what a joined-up approach could look like in your environment.

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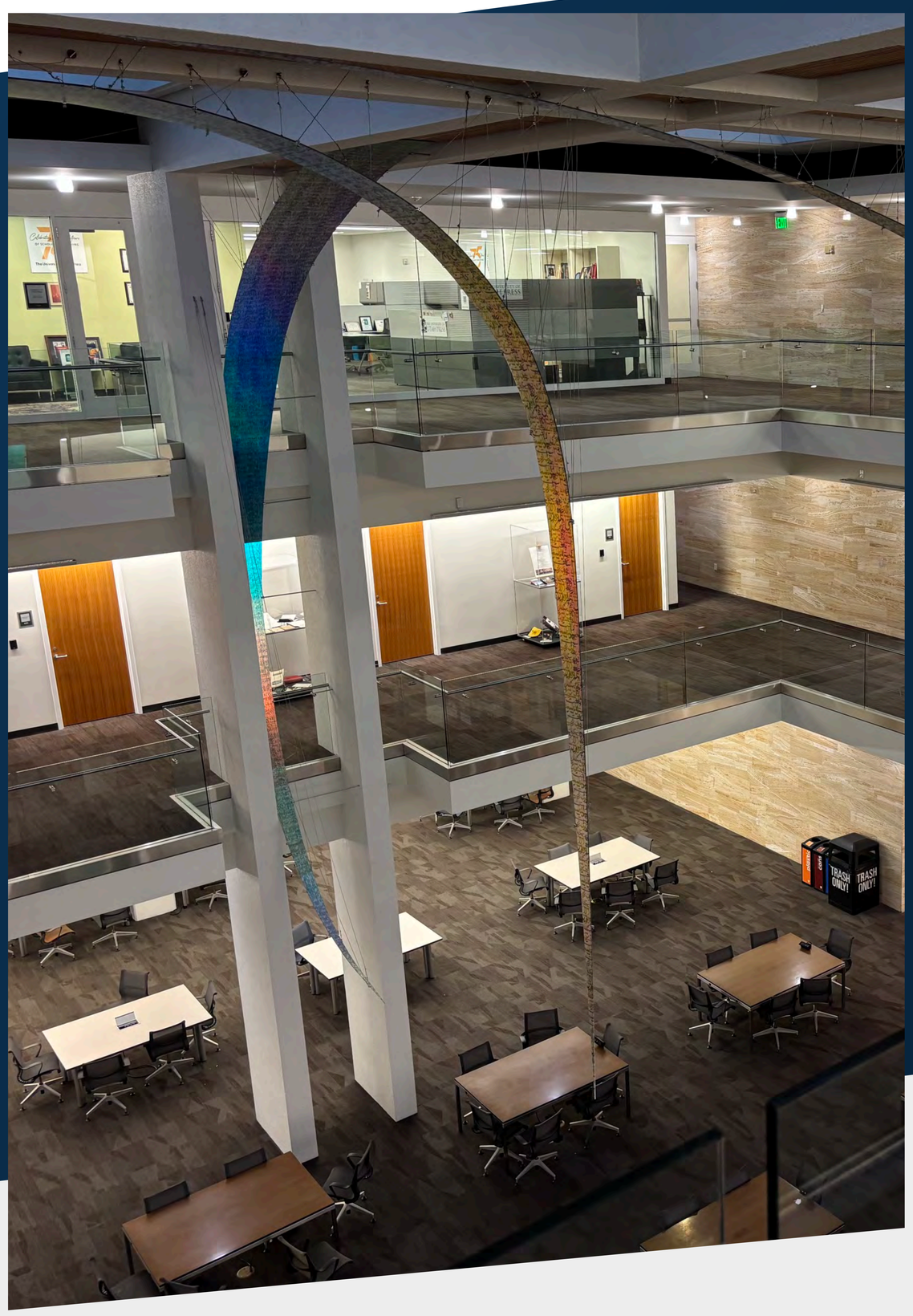

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