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Brad Neily, Disability Services Coordinator, UC Merced

When it opened its doors for the first time on September 5, 2005, the University of California, Merced (UC Merced) became the first American research university to open in the 21st Century. It is the 10th campus in the renowned University of California system with a unique mission as a student-centered research university.

Graduate studies have been offered since the first dozen students enrolled in off-site classes in the summer of 2004, and they are participating in some of the most cutting-edge research being conducted today, from stem cells to artificial intelligence and alternative energy.

### The Library of The Future

Needless to say, a university as progressive as UC Merced is coming up with some revolutionary ways to provide their students with the most relevant, up-to-date research materials they need for their studies. Perhaps the UC Merced Library’s tagline sums it up best; “not what other research libraries are, what they will be.”

“Our focus is really on electronic resources, and leveraging the resources available to us as part of a consortium of ten campuses,” said Eric Scott, director of administrative services and the head of access services for the library. “Traditionally, research libraries follow certain standards and require huge physical library collections. Four years into it, and we have 60,000 – 70,000 books on our shelves.”

That’s because the UC Merced Library is taking advantage of all the benefits that digital books can provide. And they’re able to do it by using an APT BookScan 1200, one of the first automatic page turning devices invented by Kirtas Technologies.

### The Kirtas Solution

Scott saw the APT system at an American Library Association (ALA) conference and says he was immediately enamored with it. A major appeal of the Kirtas solution is its ability to handle books more gently than the human hand. The APT system is unique in that the binding does not have to be removed or forced open 180 degrees under glass for digitizing. Instead, special page-turning technology gently advances each page with the SureTurn™ robotic arm and safely holds the book in a continuous, height-adjusting 110 degree SmartCradle™.

“I went looking for funding immediately, and we were able to purchase the APT 1200,” Scott said. “The image quality is spot on and there have been very few issues. It’s a great product and the reliability is unbelievable.”

The main objective for the library is to support the university’s faculty and students. They’re able to do it more efficiently by providing electronic formats of most of the supplemental reading assignments faculty members have for their students.

Supplemental Course Resources often referred to as reserves, are offered to faculty by the library to make additional course materials available to students through the university's course management system. The library ensures that fair use and copyright are followed, and materials are digitized using the APT system and made available for posting electronically.

"It's much more efficient to get a book, scan a chapter, and put it online so it is accessible only by a specific teacher's students," notes Scott. "Students can download, print and view resources simultaneously. It's a better process, and it ties up books for much less time."

Another benefit of the APT system on site is the ability to provide alternative media to students who need it.

### Access for All

Brad Neily is UC Merced's disability services coordinator, and he works with students to determine what they need in terms of support. It's also an issue of compliance under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

"The compliance obligation under ADA is quite high requiring program and information accessibility," notes Neily. "Providing alternative media is essential. A student with vision issues, for example, may require something completely different than a person with a learning disability."

Neily says the university works with publishers to acquire books in PDF format, which allows them to convert to a Word document with searchable text. In the absence of a

file from the publisher, the APT system digitizes the requested book—which the student is required to purchase—to create the digital file.

"Extractable text is needed versus a scanned image, which isn't useful when OCR [optical character recognition] is trying to guess what character it's looking at," Neily states. UC Merced then uses Dolphin Easy Converter to create multiple formats--such as large print, MP3, DAISY and Braille—of the learning materials.

"The ultimate goal is to get out of the media production business, but until that happens this is the best way to get our students what they need," Neily said.

Now that more than two years have passed since their first introduction to the APT 1200, Eric Scott says what was a large—and somewhat risky—expense has turned into a great investment. His advice to others considering their own digitization program?

"The key is to think strategically as to what is going to be your long term benefit," Scott concluded. "Very few pieces of equipment in our library offer the high return on investment we've received."



7620 Omnitech Place, Victor New York 14564  
 email: [info@kirtas.com](mailto:info@kirtas.com)  
 phone [585] 924-2420 toll-free [800] 340-4365  
[www.kirtas.com](http://www.kirtas.com) | [www.kirtaseurope.com](http://www.kirtaseurope.com) | [www.kirtasmaghreb.com](http://www.kirtasmaghreb.com)