

Maintenance

Narrator: Experienced project managers know that work on a newly implemented system is really just the beginning of that system's life. In operation since 1990, the Primus custom publishing system at McGraw-Hill is no exception. Systems maintenance includes the monitoring, evaluating and modifying of the operational system to keep up with technological improvement and competitive responses. Maintenance also takes into account the learning curve attached to using the system, both by McGraw-Hill personal and its customers. Necessary enhancements quickly became evident.

Caroline Mattura; Manager, Custom Publishing: The original idea for Primus was not only to customize content, print it and ship it but also distribute and print and ship. So we would be able to then send files to a local printer, and then have them print and then ship locally and we developed a lot of software around that to be able to support the local shop. Unfortunately, what we could not predict was that they would not be as honest in paying their bills. So they would end up printing one copy and then taking it off to a photo copier and not pay for the copies and then we also had unreliable print quality. So then if you don't have some really big print company or some center for printing and shipping your print quality does tend to suffer.

Narrator: Then in the 1990's, a phenomenon known as the internet began to pop up everywhere on college campuses. It became increasingly evident that Primus needed a presence.

Ginny Moffat; VP Course Content Delivery: When we realized that we really needed to have some kind of digital custom delivery the first thing we did after we talked to the Primus team who was running the system and asked how can we possibly do this, was assemble a high level team within McGraw-Hill Higher Education group so that we had the heads of editorial, marketing, sales, people who worked in production and all areas. For one thing we wanted to make sure Primus was the horse to ride. We wanted to take a look at what else was available, what were our options in terms of being online delivery and online web interface. And so we did look at outside vendors., we looked at some other projects going on in house, we had a lot of criteria because we had a vision of what we wanted professors to be able to do what we wanted students to be able to do, knowing our resources might be contained so we may only be able to build the foundation and not the whole house – at least we would have the footprint we wanted it to be. And that was a time consuming process, as you can imagine, but without the buy-in from all the areas in the company, it just wasn't going to work.

Narrator: The addition of a web-based, front-end order entry interface triggered skyrocketing demand for custom works, and the system continues to evolve and grow with the addition of e-books.

Ginny Moffat; VP Course Content Delivery: E-book is exactly what's on the page of a print book. Its full-color and it also has, depending on the option that the student chooses, they have the ability to highlight, bookmark, annotate and search the web. And the e-book is interactive to that extent. It doesn't have videos but it is exactly the book they want, its online or they can download it to their computer and they can do at least everything they can do with a traditional book and in some cases more.

Narrator: As for the future?

Caroline Mattura; Manager, Custom Publishing: I think that we're going to be involved in online learning. I think that we are going to be involved in delivering material faster, in a more customized way, and maybe even going out further than education, even a corporate, international presence.

Narrator: As you think about the entire system's life cycle for Primus and its maintenance and future in particular, consider these questions:

- If you were a professor considering adoption of a custom textbook for your students, which form would you choose? Black and white print or color e-book? Support your answer.
- Part of system maintenance is managing the growing volume of content in the Primus database. If you were managing this content, what criteria might you use for determining what gets added?
- Since many print textbooks are revised every few years, how would this process affect content in the Primus database?