



xwave brings vision to life at Memorial University

Looking east from the St. John's campus of Memorial University of Newfoundland is Signal Hill, a location made famous by Guglielmo Marconi who received the first transatlantic wireless message there at the turn of the 20th century. One hundred years has past since this great technical feat, but for many at Atlantic Canada's largest university, Signal Hill is an apt reminder of the spirit of technical innovation.

No one department at Memorial has been more inspired than the Office of the Registrar, based on the array of student services it provides. In fact, it recently earned high marks for delivering leading-edge, web-based services to its 15,000 students from the prestigious Commonwealth University Management Benchmarking Programme, a comparison study of Canadian universities.



Case Study

Unlike most universities, Memorial's administration, faculty and students can manage all aspects of a pupil's academic career including recruitment, admissions, registration, convocation, official transcripts, exam scheduling, grading, billing and receivables and degree auditing via the Internet.

Memorial University offers the best student services in Canada thanks to online technology from xwave.

There are clear advantages to using online technologies according to Associate Registrar Sheila Singleton. For one, services are delivered more efficiently and in a more responsive manner. Memorial, for example, provides the fastest delivery of a student's grades in Canada, typically within five days of an exam submission. This allows students at the semester-based institution to assess in real time how their results impact their academic standings and make any changes accordingly. Other schools often take more than a month to deliver grade results.

Why is the University so focussed on delivering the best student services in Canada? "That's simple," Singleton explains. "The University wants students to focus on their academic semester, rather than get bogged down on administrative matters that will distract them from their education."

This means, in part, creating a suite of services that enhance, rather than detract from, the student's experience at Memorial. And for Singleton, the person responsible for such services, advanced technologies must play a fundamental role.



"Online technologies enable us to deliver student services in a more dynamic and convenient way," explains Singleton. "With the integration of technologies such as the Internet, Memorial is now well positioned to maintain and expand upon its innovative services."

Using xwave's experience and technical expertise to develop the right solution.

Singleton attributes Memorial's leadership in student services to the administration's unwavering vision and its business partner, xwave, for its ability to translate this vision into a sound IT strategy. xwave, one of Canada's largest IT firm's, has worked with Memorial for more than 30 years in developing, implementing and maintaining solutions.


In the early 1990's, xwave developed the University's Interactive Voice Response technology that permits individuals to register for courses and pay tuition via the telephone. While it was one of the first Canadian universities to implement this service, administrators from Memorial recognized that it was just the tip of the iceberg.

"We knew where we wanted to go and xwave knew how to take us there," says Singleton.



Memorial University... provides the fastest delivery of a student's grades in Canada.





However, Memorial faced a number of challenges including an antiquated mainframe system that restrained the expansion of innovative student services, according to xwave's John Curtis, the current Project Manager for Memorial University. The IT firm conducted a review of the system and made a number of recommendations. "The critical first step was to migrate to a Unix platform and incorporate a robust database system. It was a necessary and strategic move to ensure Memorial's vision could be realized."

In 1993, xwave helped Memorial draft an RFP to find the most appropriate software suite for student administration. Upon an extensive review, a Pennsylvania-based company that specializes in educational systems was selected. xwave then formed the project team, including internal and external staff, to put the new platform in place and implement the product.

As with any large-scale installation there were a number of challenges. But as the Associate Registrar explains "how one deals with these problems is the litmus test and xwave passed with flying colors."

Singleton was most impressed with the firm's approach to customizing software code. For example, extensive modifications were required to make the original applications reflect Memorial's needs. "Our xwave contacts 'owned' the challenge, acting as if they were school administrators and accountable to our internal objectives," says Singleton. "This kind of commitment bodes well for us, particularly

because we operate on finite resources. You just can't buy that kind of expertise and dedication."

The end result is that Memorial stands apart from other universities in their range of student services. "A lot of universities now have the technology, but not the solutions that we provide to our students. This is, in large part, due to our relationship with xwave," states Singleton.

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Associate Registrar, Sheila Singleton



**xwave and Memorial University—
a textbook example
of innovative teamwork.**

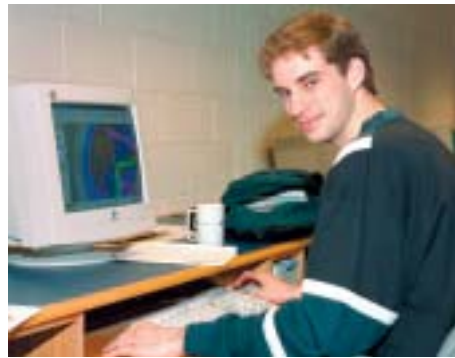
xwave's role continues to grow along with the range of services provided by Memorial. It regularly evaluates, recommends and customizes new software solutions. A dedicated support team of 10 professionals is available to immediately address any issue that may arise. It's not uncommon for xwave to visit the U.S.-based software vendor on its own time to learn more about the 'inner workings' of the software solutions. They also take a look at technical upgrades and upcoming product releases.



Case Study

Critical knowledge is then passed on to the University for their consideration.

Students overwhelmingly endorse the direction Memorial has taken. For example, more than 40 percent of students registered online when it first became available. "Feedback is extremely positive and we are ultimately, with the help of xwave, leaving a positive and long-lasting impression in our students' minds about Memorial."



Signal Hill may be located off campus. But its spirit of technical innovation is alive and well in the corridors of Memorial University.

Contact us

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