

CASE STUDY

Connectria helps Houghton Mifflin Harcourt consolidate IT infrastructure



Challenge

HMH had a diverse and disconnected IT infrastructure with everything from homegrown systems to those inherited through acquisition. They needed to consolidate vendors and streamline systems.

Selection Criteria

- A provider that understood how to optimize infrastructure
- A provider HMH didn't need to "handhold"
- Fast and responsive

Platforms

Windows, Hyper-V

Results

With very minimal interaction from HMH, they've enjoyed almost 100% uptime and haven't had any major issues.

Since 1832, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (HMH) is one of the world's longstanding publishing houses, providing pre-K-12 education and professional development materials. With a large and diverse IT operations, HMH decided to consolidate and streamline its internal systems, including the use of managed hosting. They chose Connectria to host and manage its critical Integrated Publishing System and continue to explore an expanded relationship with Connectria.

The Challenge

As a company with over 4,000 employees, HMH manages a large and diverse IT infrastructure. Some of these systems were homegrown while others were inherited through Houghton's acquisition of Harcourt Education in 2007, as well as subsequent acquisitions. In order to ensure a more efficient IT operation capable of achieving company goals, HMH decided to consolidate and streamline its platforms and vendors. According to Michael Kelley, HMH Vice President, Business Relationship Management & Governance, "We've been spending the last couple of years trying to get a much more straightforward, consolidated and synchronized approach to systems. We want to make sure we avoid having multiple suppliers of the same service or application trying to solve the same problem."

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One of the key systems that HMH had to address was its Integrated Publishing System (IPS). IPS is a collaboration system that supports the HMH production team, including editors and designers, in the creation of print and digital product. It's a complicated, mission-critical system for sharing materials and content under development subject to firm deadlines. For instance, HMH published content for statewide adoption, including many of the largest U.S. states with the greatest number of students, imposes immovable deadlines for delivery. It was crucial for HMH to ensure this system was "bulletproof," always available, responsive and secure.

The Solution

At the time, HMH had a charter to limit use of internal resources. This was reinforced by a new CEO and CIO. According to Kelley, "the new CEO has brought a focus. During a period in our industry, the magic word among some CEO's was outsourcing. I think the concern was you don't outsource things where you have particular expertise that really give you a differentiator in the market. More recently there's been a general trend towards managed hosting. The era of owning your own data centers was something more prevalent 10 years ago than it is now. I'd say we're definitely in that movement as well...putting the onus on the hosting provider to keep the equipment optimized, refreshed and running."

HMH maintained that it's more cost-effective and efficient to outsource infrastructure and logistics required rather than manage it internally, particularly if they could find a provider to assume this burden and do it well. "We've had the experience where you can interact with providers that require a lot babysitting and hand holding and suddenly something that you think you've purchased your way out of is your problem as well, so it's kind of a double loss," stated Michael Kelley.

With such a mission-critical system as IPS, HMH wanted to ensure they would choose the right hosting provider for managing, administering and optimizing the system. With the right partner, HMH believed they could outsource IPS and relieve themselves of its ongoing management and fine tuning.



"Reading books is the most glorious pastime that humankind has yet devised."

Wisława Szymborska

Hosted Technologies:

- Windows
- SQL Server
- Hyper-V
- Citrix

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The Results

HMH is no stranger to hosting. With several incumbents and other alternative vendors available for consideration, HMH wanted a managed hosting partner they could count upon. They believed if they were to outsource IPS, the hosting provider would need the requisite expertise along with a commitment to HMH. The IPS system is a combination of off-the-shelf software configured with a database and plug-ins which allow developers to easily collaborate with one another to create product. It's a mixture of standardized settings and very customized components that often requires fine-tuning to optimize. HMH did not want to be in a position where they would have to narrate to the hosting provider how they'd have to optimize their own equipment. After evaluating several vendors, HMH chose Connectria.

“Connectria was sincerely focused upon getting HMH what we needed first,” noted Kelley. “With some other vendors, the first discussion is how much money they’re making off the solution. Our experience with Connectria is that they concentrate on solving our problems and that pricing issues get settled as a matter of course. For example, if we have an urgent need, particularly if it were related to one of those states with hard and fast deadlines for submissions, Connectria acted as though they were really part of our business, solving our problems; then resolving relationship needs in terms of contract after the fact in some cases. I don’t think you can ask more than that. They really put themselves in our seat and figured out what we needed to get to where we wanted to go.”

“Connectria puts the Managed in Managed Hosting. Other companies claim this but with Connectria we found someone we can partner with, sort of live with us and be able to diagnose complex scenarios and provide solutions ahead of supporting issues. That’s been the real value-add from Connectria...it’s been worry free.”

Michael Kelley
HMH Vice President
Business Relationship Management
& Governance



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Under Connectria's Managed Hosting services, IPS continues to flourish. According to HMH, with very minimal interaction from them, IPS has enjoyed almost 100% uptime and they haven't had any major issues. This incident free experience was exactly what their content developers were hoping for. Kelley further noted, "We've had experiences with other companies that position themselves as managed hosting providers but were really far less than that."

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Kelley went on to say, "I'm a big fan of Connectria. They've really made it effortless to host and manage a complex environment. As we look toward expansion into cloud services, we have no reservations that Connectria has the skills and "chops" for it. We've really benefited from our relationship with Connectria. It's been a great experience."



About Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (HMH) is a global learning company with the mission of changing people's lives by fostering passionate, curious learners. Among the world's largest providers of pre-K-12 education solutions and one of its longest-established publishing houses, HMH combines cutting-edge research, editorial excellence and technological innovation to improve teaching and learning environments, as well as solving complex literacy and education challenges. Today, HMH's interactive, results-driven education solutions are utilized by over 50 million students across 150 countries, and its renowned and awarded novels, non-fiction, children's books and reference works are enjoyed by readers throughout the world.

For more information visit
hmhco.com

About Connectria

From Fortune 100 enterprises to medium and small businesses, Connectria provides managed cloud, managed services, and compliant cloud security solutions to more than 1,000 global customers. Working as an extension of each customer's IT team, we deliver technology-agnostic solutions consistently, with depth and breadth of engineering expertise, scalable solutions, and speed to market. Our "No Jerks Allowed®" philosophy includes flexible terms, straight-forward pricing, and custom solutions. With a culture based on integrity and an unwavering employee commitment to treating every customer with a relentless focus on satisfaction, it's easy to do business with Connectria.



Connect with us today

Talk to one of our IT advisors by calling **800.781.7820** or reaching out to us by email: sales@connectria.com.

