# iCan!: Empowering Librarians with iPads and Other Mobile Devices

## Mendik Mobile, Our Library's Smartphone App

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I. WHAT IS MENDIK MOBILE?

- A multi-platform smartphone app, offered as a free download, that provides basic information about our library, access to some key library services, and links to other smartphone-optimized resources.

- (What is Mendik?

    o Bernard Mendik, a prominent NYLS alum and donor for whom our library is named)

- What basic information?

    o hours of operation, library staff contacts, call number locations, circulation policies

- What services?

    o OPAC searching

    o course reserve searching and browsing

    o library circulation account information and loan renewal

- What links?

    o library blogs – new acquisitions and general announcements

    o DRAGNET – the Google Custom Search features developed by our library

    o the library's Facebook page

    o "Opt-out links" to full-browser versions of the library's homepage and OPAC

II. WHAT *ISN'T* MENDIK MOBILE? (at least not yet)

- A tablet app – it was developed for smartphones; on a tablet it runs only as well as apps written for smartphones run

- A sophisticated search engine for our OPAC

- A portal to all library resources and services

- A comprehensive research tool

III. HOW WAS MENDIK MOBILE CONCEIVED?

- NYLS librarians recognized the value of offering our users the ability to use their smartphones as information appliances for our library.

- We also recognized the limitations of smartphones as information appliances

  - small screens

  - limited file storage capabilities

  - limited printing capabilities

- Having only limited technical background, and no experience with programming apps, we contracted with Boopsie, a library app developer, to produce Mendik Mobile.

- We reviewed apps developed by Boopsie for other libraries, mostly public and undergraduate, and liked what we saw.

  - Boopsie had developed useful apps built on the Innovative Interfaces ILS that we use.

  - They were willing to program in channels to perform functions that we did not see in their other apps – e.g. browsing Reserve items.

  - Cost was not prohibitive.

IV. WHO DID WHAT?

- NYLS Mendik Library Automation Committee: nine library staff members drawn from technical services, reference and administration

  - named the app

  - chose the desired features, descriptive names for channels, and order of channels

  - worked with NYLS's Office of Marketing and Communications to choose the color scheme and provide Law School-branded graphics

  - applied to the Apple Developer program, and procured the developer's license that enabled us to submit the app to Apple's store

  - tested

  - promoted the app to the Law School community

- Boopsie, our contractor

    - programmed the app

    - specified graphics requirements, and provided graphics for the channels

    - got the app listed in app stores, including Apple's

    - provided a Web page for downloading the app from their servers

    - technical support – troubleshooting bugs

- Innovative Interfaces, Inc., our ILS provider

    - minimal involvement – the OPAC search feature runs on a "flat file" generated from our Innovative OPAC database

- NYLS Office of Information Technology

    - no involvement

V. WORKING WITH MENDIK MOBILE– The app was launched in October 2011; our contract with Boopsie comes up for renewal in September 2014.

- "Killer" feature for our library: course reserves – enables students to identify their course books, check availability, and renew loans

    - Every library contemplating an app should aim for "killer" features specific to its patrons' particular needs.

- Mendik Mobile runs on Boopsie's servers, so most enhancements appear immediately on all users' smartphones, with no need for updating the app on the device.

    - few enhancements over the course of 2½ years

- Evaluating Mendik Mobile

    - word-of-mouth: the app has been a success, by anecdote

    - usage statistics: Boopsie's and the Apple Store's

    - Boopsie has been less helpful in providing Google Play statistics

- Evaluating Boopsie: the contractor has been responsive to our needs, BUT
    - remains oriented toward public and undergraduate libraries, rather than research or law libraries
    - little development of the underlying "app shell" product – no offer of development of a Mendik Mobile app for tablets