



# BlackBerry Customer Success Story

## University turns to smartphones for multi-year research project into youth culture



The University of Texas at Dallas (UT Dallas) is a research institution focused on science and technology. Starting as a research institute and later developing graduate and undergraduate programs, UT Dallas is host to seven schools and 29 research centers, with a current enrolment of more than 14,500 students. In 2004, it opened a Natural Science and Engineering Research Building, fuelling its drive to become a tier-one academic research institution.

**Industry:** Health Sciences / Research

**Region:** North America

**Company Size:** Mid-sized Study  
- 185 participants

**Email Platform:** MS Exchange

**Solution:**

- Customizable, hosted messaging platform from Ceryx, utilizing Hosted BlackBerry® services
- Message Archiver from Global Relay

### THE CHALLENGE

Dr. Marion Underwood, Professor of Psychology at UT Dallas' Center for Children and Families, has been conducting a multi-year study on adolescents' social networks and their impact on development. She began the study when the 185 participants were nine years old and in the third grade - they're now 16 and in the tenth grade.

She was using traditional research methods that included observing the participants in a laboratory and administering questionnaires to friends, parents and teachers. Dr. Underwood's research team coded these observed interactions and measured adjustments at school through teacher reports.

But electronic communications have become an integral part of the participants' social lives. So Dr. Underwood received funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to study the content of teens' texts, e-mails and instant messages. "It didn't start off to be a study of electronic communications but it's evolved into one," said Dr. Underwood. "I view it as a direct glimpse into adolescent peer culture."

Analyzing this content for clues to social behaviour, the study required an enterprise-grade solution that could deliver a reliable, economical messaging platform and handle high volumes of data - all the while helping to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants.

### THE SOLUTION

Dr. Underwood's research team chose a BlackBerry hosted solution from Ceryx based on its ability to provide a controlled environment for their research. To ensure accuracy, the project required a customized messaging solution that could meet a high volume of messages with archival and search functionality.

They turned to solution provider Ceryx who offers a customizable, hosted messaging platform for mobile platforms like BlackBerry. Ceryx worked to develop a hosted solution, utilizing an enterprise-level Microsoft® Exchange Server and BlackBerry® Enterprise Server that would provide intuitive message archival and search capabilities.

In the first month of the study the sample group sent and received more than 250,000 text messages and 1,200 e-mail messages. Since then, they have logged more than 1.5 million text messages, with one student sending and receiving almost 20,000 texts in one month. The volume of data that will be archived over the course of the study would challenge many large enterprises.

“ To meet the goals of our project, we needed a sophisticated hosted messaging solution like what Ceryx offers, paired with BlackBerry smartphone technology, because of the way it can control the scope of our research and ensure the privacy of our participants. And the students think the BlackBerry smartphones are really cool.”

Dr. Marion Underwood  
Professor of Psychology  
UT Dallas' Center for Children and Families

The university's solution provides full storage and search capabilities of the messages sent and received by the participants, even where the original message has been deleted. “By using a customized BlackBerry Enterprise Server paired with Global Relay archiving, we were able to deploy a solution that met all of UT Dallas' data tracking and retention requirements. The flexibility and configurability inherent in the BlackBerry solution ensured that the final product was not only quick and relatively painless to develop, but also reliable,” said Mark Chabot, Senior Sales Engineer with Ceryx.

Global Relay's Message Archiver is designed to create a copy of all texts, e-mails and instant messages that are then replicated and unified, eliminating the size limitations of mailboxes.

## UT DALLAS' BENEFITS

By using the BlackBerry solution and the Ceryx messaging platform, Dr. Underwood's research team was able to initiate the study without investing capital into server hardware and hiring multiple staff to build and administer the servers. Also, by providing the participants with BlackBerry smartphones to use whenever and wherever they choose, researchers don't interfere with the students' interactions, however all data is collected accurately and unobtrusively.

Additionally, a hosted model helps to maintain the students' privacy with their communications. Ceryx provides the ability to create custom security policies on the BlackBerry solution through its control panel, allowing administrators to get granular in terms of what users are allowed - or not allowed - to access. And that's why it was necessary to use the BlackBerry platform. “It's the mobile security device of choice when it comes to our large enterprise clients,” said John Carthy, vice-president of marketing with Ceryx. “IT administrators need to standardize on one mobility device that they can easily control and manage. With the BlackBerry platform, customized IT policies can be applied across an entire organization or portion of the organization.”

So far, pilot samples have given researchers interesting material to interpret. By carefully archiving the participant's communications using the Ceryx solution and BlackBerry smartphones, the study should be able to measure how social behaviour manifests and provide insight into the evolution of relationships during this developmental period.

The research team has secured another five years of funding, which will allow them to follow the students through their senior year of high school and possibly into college. “For the goals of our project, we needed BlackBerry smartphones and the Ceryx hosted solution because of the way we can control our research environment,” said Dr. Underwood.

For the research community, this is the first study of its kind to look at what students actually say in their electronic communications. “We will have a huge archive of what teenagers say to one another, and I view that as a window into adolescent peer culture,” Dr. Underwood. The results could also enhance what is known about child safety and online technologies to better inform policy decisions about youth access to electronic tools and online communications.

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## KEY BENEFITS

- Easy access to large amounts of data
  - Relatively trouble-free management with the Ceryx messaging platform
  - Helps to meet privacy and confidentiality needs of the study's participants
  - A platform for ongoing research to provide insight into adolescent peer culture
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