

## Case Study

# SMART move by NZ libraries pays off



### Introduction

Civica's cloud-based Spydus library management solution has helped librarians around Greater Wellington create one of the world's most travelled library collections.

The SMART Libraries service allows borrowers to find and share books and other resources from 22 library branches throughout the region. Launched in 2010, almost 90,000 items were exchanged between libraries during that time.

Reservations are free and resources can be delivered and returned to a library most convenient to members. At any point in time thousands of books are being reserved, returned and transported between branches from Hutt City Libraries, Kāpiti Coast District Libraries, Masterton District Library, Porirua City Libraries, Wellington Institute of Technology, and Whitireia Library.

Brian Anderson, Manager, City Libraries, Porirua, said the formation of SMART "was a pragmatic decision driven by the need to provide a better level of service whilst ensuring we could preserve the local integrity of our libraries. It was something that really hadn't been done before in New Zealand, or possibly anywhere else."

SMART Libraries uses Civica's sophisticated integrated library management system, Spydus, to share resources and lending arrangements between all participants. It includes the necessary back-end functions such as cataloguing, inter-library loans workflow processing, circulation and reporting, as well as providing front-end search portals used by borrowers.

### Why it was needed

The need for public libraries to reflect their local community is important to New Zealanders and one of SMART Libraries founding principles. Public library transactions in New Zealand have more than doubled during the past 10 years, with more than 93 million in 2014. Today almost half of all Kiwis (49.8 per cent) are members of their public library, collectively visiting more than 37,500 times over the course of a year<sup>1</sup>.

Borrower networks between public libraries offer many cultural, practical and cost-effective advantages to local communities, including a wider selection of materials and lower operational costs.

However the size and complexity of managing an inter-library loan system can often be challenging. SMART Libraries needs to track and manage the location, status and borrower details from a catalogue of almost 500,000 books, DVDs, magazines, electronic resources, local history materials, and other learning resources, as well as the details of around 100,000 SMART Libraries borrowers.

SMART Libraries also sought to include tertiary library collections, as well as those from public libraries – allowing polytechnic students free-flowing access to information and resources whether they were studying at institutions or in their non-study lives.

Anderson said "from the outset we saw SMART Libraries as a collaboration rather than a consortium. It allowed us all to expand our collection and begin operating collaboratively while still being accountable to our individual ratepayers or students."

### A SMARTer solution

Managing such a large, diverse and mobile collection requires an enormous amount of computing power and storage capability, all of which is managed via the cloud by Spydus.

Spydus is able to tell borrowers and librarians the location, reservation status and transaction details of more than 500,000 items in real-time. This includes a module which documents and tracks archival items and cultural collections. SMART Libraries help preserve many unique historical items from their local communities. For example, Masterton's Heritage collection includes many images, oral histories and archival records that can be found via Spydus.

By utilising Civica's managed services offering, SMART Libraries data is completely secure in major data facilities in Auckland. Information from the database can be updated and retrieved instantly around the clock from any location, with Civica also providing around the clock technology support services.

Anderson said another advantage of taking a managed services approach was the ability to deploy the service. The SMART Libraries services took just six months to move from initial concept development to being operational.

"It all happened very quickly--we went from creating the concept to completing the rollout within about six months. We have continued to improve the service ever since, working closely with Civica to enhance its core functionality."

## SMARTer searching

A key requirement in the successful adoption of the service was making the shared collection easily discoverable for borrowers.

In addition to researching books by keywords, similar to an Internet search, the SMART Libraries Spydus system can review library member borrowing history and make suggestions, such as currently popular items, recently published or prize-winning titles. Borrowers can search quickly for information on a particular topic without having to spend a lot of time browsing through journals or books.

With the very real likelihood that an item could be up to 100km from the borrower, Spydus also takes into account the geography and resource. With Spydus, when customers search for a title, the system will search within the local library, then across the region before widening out the search in increments across the SMART Libraries collection ensuring that stock is provided from the closest location.

Librarians are also automatically advised of reservation requests as part of a workflow management systems which was suggested by the SMART team and implemented by Civica. It lets librarians and borrowers see the availability status of an item, its location, as well as the borrower details.

These search and workflow tools mean that despite the distances and large reservation volumes, most items can be in the hands of borrowers within just three days. Anderson said SMART Libraries has a fulfilment rate of more than 90 per cent, which was up from using more traditional inter-library loan library models.

## Connecting with community

A significant part of Spydus is the OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue) which essentially provides library members with remote web access to the SMART Libraries catalogue. OPAC also provides self-service functionality for customers, allowing them to undertake tasks such as online reservations and renewals.

The service allows for SMS text or email notices – reminders when items are due, overdue and when a reservation is available for pick up. Users can recommend resources for other community members, as well as integrating with social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter to share their views on recently read books.

The cohesive approach also provides another benefit in the sharing of professional expertise – where knowledge and expertise is shared around the region. The consistent approach has enabled staff to share knowledge between libraries.

## The benefits

The SMART project was the first in the country to link tertiary and public libraries, providing a lifelong library usage experience for borrowers across the region.

By improving the accessibility of existing resources across libraries, branches have been able to provide new resources – and ensure the public libraries remain a conduit to larger collections from across the region – and for that library members are well pleased.

It also means that the local library support community members throughout their lifetime – from helping small children to find their first book, to student research, professional development and pursuing other community interests. In essence, SMART is trying to ensure libraries are part of everyone's lives regardless if they are just learning to read, a student at school or in higher education, an adult and a member of society.

It is this lifelong learning approach that librarians involved in the SMART Libraries project find most appealing. Anderson said: "our library has seen annual reserves increase from 17,000 in 2008 to 37,000 in 2014. The latest customer survey found 98 per cent of borrowers are satisfied with the service."

"SMART Libraries has worked with Civica to streamline many of the transactional functions common across multiple libraries. In doing so it has achieved a range of efficiencies and freed up staff time to be better spent on tasks which help transform communities."

By hosting on Civica's managed services infrastructure, SMART libraries have moved the responsibility of managing a specialist system from ICT departments to the expert in the product. Doing so has also provided a reliable and robust service which has gained the confidence and approval of both Library staff and IT Managers.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.lianza.org.nz/profession/facts-figures>