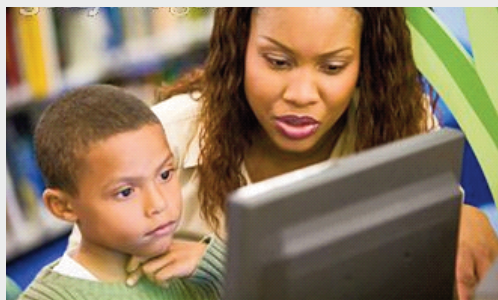


SELMS consortium changes the face of libraries in the South East



“Civica supported our planning process and spelt out security protocols demanded by the implementation group. This led to a rapid migration to Spydus, reduced error rates, and successful overnight data migration so that we hit project targets.”

Diane Chilmaid

SELMS Chair and Business Support Manager for Kent County Council's Library & Archives Service.

The Challenge

Britain's libraries are facing a time of unprecedented change and upheaval. The public's reading and information-gathering habits are changing in an online world. However, expected government spending cuts could threaten the ability of library authorities to meet customer needs. Library professionals are having to react daily but still plan ahead very carefully to maintain successful library services. In South East England, based on the capabilities of new technology, a steady transformation of library services provided to over 8% of the UK population is already taking place.

The Solution

In 2006, a group of forward-thinking public library authorities joined forces with private sector partner Civica. Their aim was to build an open framework for shared learning, sharing resources and improving underlying library management systems. The initiative has gained further momentum in recent years as new library authorities have continued to join the consortium. It is also having profound effects on library teams and their long-term ability to anticipate operational changes to procurement and service development, or new policies handed down on data management and security.

The consortium, called South East Library Management Services (SELMS), was set up jointly by six founder members and Civica. SELMS has now grown to twelve members with the addition of Hertfordshire County Council, Camden Council and Slough Borough Council, following the decision by the UK's largest library authority, Kent, together with the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham and Medway Council in 2008. As the preferred consortium supplier, currently working with more than 1500 libraries in Australia, Singapore, the UK and the USA, Civica is providing the different members with tailored library services, ranging from an all-embracing managed service platform and the market-leading 'Spydus' software to specialist library infrastructure services.

The Result

The SELMS initiative is helping improve the management and service capabilities of the participants' library services, which together serve nearly five million people across South East England, while ensuring these services' local identity is retained. This vital balance is achieved largely because, through the members' collaboration, SELMS has proved itself to be a very successful foundation for learning and improvement. It is continually helping senior library professionals to shape their thinking on service needs and how to improve core processes and, more than that, deliver real innovations for patrons.

The consortium of 2010 is now able to focus on three main areas: bridging Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) requirements and user needs, extending and optimising their own services' available resources, and evolving process improvements that will deliver better customer service, accessibility and efficiency. In that initial phase, Civica was able to provide a core framework for libraries to streamline their processes. They could 'right size' the level of managed service and programme implementations to their individual needs because the Spydus platform provides comprehensive but flexible administration.

In addition, the system combines the automation of traditional library functions including web-based and mobile user access with the latest developments in administration. Furthermore, Spydus- based library services can accommodate platforms such as radio frequency identification technology (RFID) for advanced stock control and asset management if required.

The Future

Now, through the close working partnership established by the authorities and Civica over the years, SELMS is helping provide a far broader – and in some cases an unexpected - basis for continual improvement, based on core elements of:

- > Framework for sharing knowledge, system resources and innovations
- > Greater insight into key areas such as procurement
- > Creating an effective learning interface between DCMS and library authorities
- > Helping library professionals to understand customers' needs particularly online downloadable online content and e-Books

Much of this comes down to SELMS' robust management and information sharing structure. Members are sharing knowledge about common issues every month through the Implementation Group and every other month for the Steering Board. Through this approach, the consortium is able to keep abreast of forthcoming government or regulatory guidelines as well as best practice on technical aspects of existing and new projects.

"As a Spydus member, we don't have to originate procurement requests from scratch. This applies across other service areas, so we are saving our resources all the time. Library services nation-wide are obviously facing spending cuts but there is also the daily challenge of meeting customers' needs. These now include e-Books, downloadable content, increasing service mobility and innovations such as universal card interoperability of tickets as well as 'traditional' lending enquiries."

Simon Parkes of Civica commented:

"Some shared or consortium-style models can potentially compromise the individuality of the separate library authorities but helping retain their branch libraries' character through sharing information remains the defining feature of the SELMS initiative. Building on the central SELMS 'hub', each local member authority is able to set up tailor-made service capabilities to suit its innovation needs while respecting budgetary constraints."

"We're pleased with the working relationship where there have been any project challenges, all sides have taken an adult approach and shared information. Everyone has been prepared to look for the ultimate outcome and engage from there."

Diane Chilmaid
SELMS Chair and Business Support Manager for
Kent County Council's Library & Archives Service.

About Civica

Civica Group Ltd is a market leader in specialist systems and outsourcing services that help organisations to improve service delivery and efficiency, with specialist expertise in local government, education, social housing, health care and enforcement. blending software applications, IT managed services...

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