



*An LMS to support a modern library service*

### The Challenges:

- Providing a higher level of service on a tighter budget
- Understanding the community's requirements, and how best to serve them
- Becoming the face of the County Councils.

### The Outcomes:

- Streamlined back-office processes
- Staff liberated from bureaucratic tasks to spend more time serving the community
- More sessions for young children, and more time for one-to-one sessions and reader development
- Combined savings of £300,000 over five years

### Background

We are all well aware of the financial difficulties our local authorities face today. The pressure to provide a higher level of service on a tighter budget than ever experienced is certainly on the rise. To tackle this challenge, Leicestershire Library Service focused on two areas: understanding what their community requires and how best to serve them.

## Marketing the Library Service

Leicestershire Libraries began by looking into the usage of their stock, and turned to the community for feedback by kicking off a marketing project. Margaret Bellamy, Head of Library Services, Leicestershire Libraries explains: "We wanted to understand the borrowing habits of different segments - as granular as what items do women aged 60 like to borrow?"

## Better, connected services

Looking to extend their service offering, Leicestershire Libraries plan to become part of the County Council's 'Customer First' project, which offers an improved service to citizens, resolving enquiries as quickly as possible. Margaret envisages that Leicestershire's libraries are well placed to become the face of the County Council. Margaret adds: "This isn't just about the library being a book lending service but about the library being a County Council service and information point."

## An LMS to support

To support this, Leicestershire needed to extract usage statistics from their Library Management System (LMS). However, it was difficult to get data out of the system due to previous configuration. Margaret explains "Since we've been a Capita customer for over 15 years, the system had become unwieldy as we kept adding scripts to the database."

In order to achieve this vision, Leicestershire Libraries needed to streamline back-office processes to free staff to engage with the public more. The LMS needed to provide usage statistics more easily and offer tight integration with the County Council's CRM system.

After a competitive tender process, Leicestershire reselected the Alto LMS on the strength of the EDI functionality, integration with the County Council's systems and the management information system, Decisions.

## Streamlining business processes

Before re-implementing the LMS, Leicestershire completed a fundamental review of all systems and business processes within the library. There were two key questions used when reviewing each process: "Why are we doing this? If it is required, how can we simplify it?"

Reviewing the business processes ensured that the system was current and accurate, therefore ensuring the usage statistics extracted from the system are indicative of borrower trends. It also helped to streamline back-office processes, liberating staff from needless bureaucracy tasks in order to spend more valuable time serving the community.

## Engaging with staff

Leicestershire had an ambitious schedule for redeploying the LMS. To gather requirements and minimise disruption, Leicestershire engaged with many members of staff "after all they are the ones who will be using the system the most" explains Margaret. Meetings and open discussions took place to discuss specifics around the configuration and how to improve ways of working. An implementation team was set up to lead the project which included all levels and types of staff.

To remove apprehension about moving into front line roles to engage with the community more, Leicestershire provided a lot of training. This included courses about basic interpersonal skills, how to approach people and how to read body language to identify when people need assistance.

## More time with the community

Following the training, reimplementation of the LMS and new streamlined processes, staff no longer have to stand behind counters to issue books, staff have now become 'floor walkers' They are in the library spending time in the public arena Leicestershire now hosts more sessions for young children, and have more time for one-to-one IT sessions and reader development. Margaret explains "Staff are able to spend time with customers to discuss their reading habits and help select new books, making the library far more approachable so people come in more."

## Efficiency savings

As well as the non cashable efficiency savings in terms of better customer service, Leicestershire's business plan had hoped to make cashable savings too. The business process reviews enabled Leicestershire to save 11 and a half posts in order to pay for RFID self-service implementation in 16 libraries. Combining these savings and the savings from the LMS, Leicestershire are saving £300,000 over five years.

"Our IT business partner said it was one of the best IT projects that the County Council has implemented and an exemplar of how to plan and implement a major project." Margaret explained. "The project was well planned, staff and library staff worked well as a team. I'm very pleased with how the project went."

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