

# MID-COLUMBIA LIBRARY INCREASES CIRCULATION WITH COLLECTIONHQ

**Mid-Columbia Library is an 11 branch system serving a population of 196,115.** As a forward thinking library system, Mid-Columbia Library wanted to be able to use evidence-based analytics to develop and improve the performance of its collection. The implementation of collectionHQ at the library has helped to make this a possibility.



## THE CHALLENGE

Two key obstacles faced by Mid-Columbia Library before the adoption of collectionHQ was the regulation of processes across the library's 11 branches and execution of analytics-based processes with limited resources. Michael Huff, Collections & Services Director at Mid-Columbia Library elaborates "One challenge we faced was standardization and consistency among the libraries. As far as lifespan of books, we had some procedures in place but were unable to monitor that." Huff describes shelf space as the "prime real estate" across the library system and so a regular pattern of weeding dead and grubby stock across the branches was required to ensure the "best items" were on the shelves.

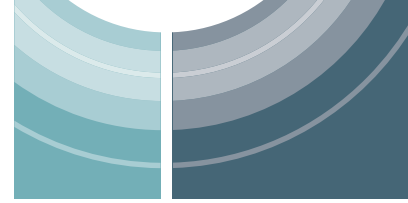
Besides creating regularity across the branches, Huff also wanted to have the ability to generate more intelligent reports to remove and replace stock based on the performance of items across the library system. "We reviewed what hadn't circulated and what had highest circulation to replace them. We were doing a lot of that by hand which involved using the simple reporting systems we had with Polaris and pulling that raw data out of the ILS into an excel sheet was very time consuming. By doing it that way, you may only be able to look at one branch at a time which means you could take days or weeks to pull all of the information together."

After attending a collectionHQ presentation at a PLA conference in Portland, Huff was able to identify the 'evidence based stock management' (EBSM) methodology incorporated in the software as the tool they needed to make those weeding and replacement decisions efficiently and accurately. It was this revelation that encouraged Mid-Columbia Library to take on collectionHQ in May 2010.

## THE OUTCOME

**FINANCIAL SAVINGS** | Since going live with collectionHQ, Michael Huff and team have been able to use the software to realign the number of copies in each of their collections on an annual basis using the 'popular author standing order' functionality. This tool has helped to spend money wisely at Mid-Columbia Library as it highlights which items they need to purchase more of and which they don't need so much of. Huff explains how this principle has also helped to make more informed purchasing decisions with their floating collections. Huff describes "We float collections throughout our system and from that we have seen that you can get full in some areas but may need more of certain items in other areas. Having collectionHQ helps follow up on that to confirm where you are under stocked and need more items but also where you have less room." Not only has this feature helped the library to manage spending on their floating collection but also with how to shelf those items depending on their popularity.

collectionHQ has also been used to build an opening day collection for a new library! Huff describes how the software was used to make plans for this new collection. "We were able to use data from collectionHQ of 11 libraries and identify how much we should spend on each collection for this brand new library." Incorporating collectionHQ



## KEY BENEFITS

**The adoption of collectionHQ has helped Mid-Columbia Library to:**

- Better manage their floating collection and optimize use of shelf space based on popular items.
- Apply evidence to purchasing decisions for opening day collection at a new branch.
- Spread tasks more evenly amongst branches through effective reporting tools.
- Adjust dead stock and increase circulation.
- Better understand customer needs and ensure that they are met.



into this strategy has streamlined and removed the guesswork from this task as the library can now supply a list of what items they need and how much funds can be allocated to each. Huff concludes "We feel confident that when we open that we have enough of each collection."

**STREAMLINED PROCESSES** | In addition to helping Mid-Columbia Libraries make educated purchasing decisions, collectionHQ has also helped to structure once time-consuming and error-prone tasks.

One of those labor-intensive tasks was of course reporting. Following the retirement of a key librarian responsible for collection reports and analyses, those tasks had to be divided among other staff. Luckily the implementation of collectionHQ helped to streamline this process by providing clear, accurate and evidence-based reports in minutes which any staff member can access. Huff reflects "collectionHQ has helped consolidate a lot of things allowing other individuals to access what they need without having someone else build it for them or supplying them with a list of items they need to remove or replace. It's allowed staff to be more involved as we used to centralize selection which removed branches from what they are getting. Now each library is able to go into to collectionHQ and select from throughout the system which gives them the choice to say what they need from other branches."

collectionHQ has also helped with the weeding and transfer process at the library. Like the once centralized reporting system, the process at Mid-Columbia Library was for dead or grubby items to be sent to one central location where they would then be reviewed by selectors who made the decision on what needed to be moved to another branch or completely discarded. Huff explains that the issue with using this method of transfer was that it "relied on in some cases, guesswork". With collectionHQ's evidence based reports revealing "what should go where", this theme of speculation was eliminated.

On the whole, Huff is delighted with the increased accuracy of reporting and the time saved.

**PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENTS** | Overall collection performance has seen significant improvements since the implementation of collectionHQ at Mid-Columbia Libraries in particular concerning circulation and the ability to better meet customer demand.

In terms of circulation, the use of collectionHQ transfer reports have greatly helped to adjust dead stock and increase circulation. Huff describes that when starting with the software, the library "set a target to reduce dead items in collections down to no more than 10% in any branch". This goal was easily set with the help of collectionHQ which revealed certain branches with 23%-28% of their collection dead. Once deciding on these parameters, Huff and team were able to get to work with collectionHQ's transfer recommendations and are now reaping the rewards, having achieved the target and having set an even more ambitious target of 5%. "This year we identified 2000 items which had been dead a number of months and since that time we now have an average circulation of 0.35% per month. That works out at 4 more circulations per year per item!" What's more, since using collectionHQ, around 6000 items that were on average dead 10 months have achieved over 23,000 circulations. These improvements are continuing to be made across the system as dead stock targets for some branches are now sitting as low as 1%. This identification of dead stock has also enhanced the look and feel of the library by optimizing shelf space and placing greater visibility on popular items.

In addition, collectionHQ has helped Huff and team to better understand customer needs and ensure that these needs are met. Huff explains that prior to the adoption of the software, "particularly with fiction we had done a good job of getting enough copies of popular authors throughout system but not necessarily at right location." Staff can now see the top authors at each branch, which helps meet the preferences of each community which is important for a library serving multiple counties! Huff describes how better understanding of customer trends has also assisted with non-fiction titles by highlighting the finer details on what each community is reading. Huff elaborates that they now have the evidence to not simply provide "a broad range of subjects but what each community wants so for example a much larger collection of cooking or gardening books."



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