

COLLECTIONHQ ALLOWS PHOENIX PUBLIC LIBRARY TO SAVE TIME AND MONEY.

ICMA Certificate of Excellence Award Winner 2012 Phoenix Public Library is known nationally for being at the forefront of new practices that enhance the services it offers to customers. As part of these efforts, Phoenix in 2011 began using collectionHQ software, which uses Evidence-Based Stock Management (EBSM) to improve its collection.



THE CHALLENGE

Like many library systems, Phoenix does not have all the staff resources it would like, so it has had to choose how to deploy a limited number of employees. Quite sensibly, Phoenix Public Library has concentrated most of its staff on the front desks of library branches, where they could directly serve customers' needs.

Phoenix is a large library system, with 17 branches and a circulating collection of 1.3 million items – with an average turnover rate of 1 (an average of thirteen circulations per circulating item).

For the past eight years, Phoenix has centralized the selection of materials using a vendor's librarian staff to purchase most new circulating materials for the library. The vendor librarians make purchases for the library based on annually updated profiles.

While Phoenix was able to develop to more focused purchasing instructions based on ILS reports (Polaris), a budget crisis in 2008 made the need for more targeted instructions critical. Facing a \$2 million materials reduction between fiscal year 2008 and 2010, Sullivan and her staff of one needed a way to get quick and specific information about system needs. "One of the problems we were having as a larger system with a significant number of branches is we couldn't really figure out at a granular level what was popular in different places," says Kathleen Sullivan, Collection Development Coordinator with Phoenix Public Library. "What's popular at one library might be not-so-popular at a different one."

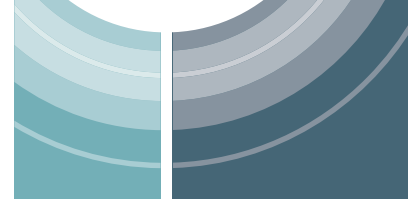
When collectionHQ became available in the United States in 2010 after several years of success in Britain, Phoenix started evaluating the software and became an active user of the product in May 2011.

THE OUTCOME

FINANCIAL SAVINGS | collectionHQ also helps Phoenix makes more informed purchasing decisions. Because the software supplies data based on actual circulation trends at Phoenix's libraries, Phoenix doesn't spend as much money as it used to on titles that are likely to be little-used. This helps ensure that Phoenix uses its budget effectively on titles that its patrons are likely to read.

For instance, in 2011, Phoenix received \$410,000 from local government for replacement books – this figure would purchase more than \$700,000 in materials and provide shelf-ready processing. Since the library had not done retrospective purchasing in many years, the Collection Development Librarians needed to identify quickly what was needed. Using collectionHQ, Sullivan and her 'children/teen's' librarian were able to quickly identify which areas required refreshing. collectionHQ software also generated lists of suggested authors and titles based on customers' interests. In less than four months, Phoenix was able to order materials, all of which had been received with shelf-ready processing by

COLLECTION PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT



KEY BENEFITS

The adoption of collectionHQ has enabled Phoenix Public Library to:

- Utilize staff time efficiently and effectively.
- Make informed purchasing decisions based on analysis of high circulating items and overused materials which need replaced.
- Identify which stock is scarcely used and which branches these items could be re-directed to where they are more popular.
- Save money by eliminating the possibility of wasteful purchases from the use of evidence when making orders.
- Maintain customer satisfaction by keeping up with customer demand where it is high and replacement of grubby material.



May 2012. "We were able to spend that money extremely expeditiously," Sullivan says. "It felt good that we were putting it where we knew the most need existed."

TIME SAVINGS | By using collectionHQ, Phoenix now has access to data and reports that were either previously unavailable in the ILS system or that required hours of tedious research and some fairly advanced computer skills. Whether librarians are searching for lists of the most popular authors and titles at specific branches, looking for stock that is worn or unread or compiling data to make evidence-based purchasing decisions, collectionHQ can quickly give accurate answers so librarians can make informed decisions.

"Before, it was like groping in the dark," Sullivan says. "Now, somebody has turned on a light and you can see what is going on. We used to make very intelligent guesses. Now it's getting to a point where we make informed choices."

She says collectionHQ has helped her and other Phoenix librarians save time, which makes them more efficient. For instance, the process of examining yearly budget figures and determining which subjects and titles to buy used to take up to two months. By using the data from collectionHQ, Sullivan thinks this year's process will be completed in merely a couple weeks.

At the branches, staff can determine within seconds who the most popular authors are in their collections. They can also see subjects that are the highest circulating and which occupy more shelf space because items do not circulate as well. This data can help with marketing campaigns and shelving allocations – an important piece of data in making their collections responsive to community needs.

"collectionHQ gives us the ability to do our jobs a lot quicker and a lot better," Sullivan says.

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENTS | Since it started using collectionHQ, Phoenix has taken advantage of the insights the software offers. With a clearer picture of circulation trends, librarians are empowered to meet the needs of their customers. The data often reveal opportunities to improve circulation numbers.

"It gives the branches a much clearer idea of what are the customers are really interested in," Sullivan says.

For example, in examining one branch's holdings of children's fiction, Sullivan and the branch librarians knew they had books by popular authors such as Richard Peck and J.K. Rowling. But it turned out that the most actively circulating titles were a subsection that wasn't on anybody's radar: paperback princess and fairy fiction. A closer look showed that most of the books in that category had been pulled because they were worn from overuse, and the library needed to replace them immediately to ensure it kept pace with strong customer demand.

At another small branch, patrons were checking out a higher-than-average number of James Patterson novels. Using collectionHQ, branch staff spotted the trend and redirected some of the author's older work from locations across the system. The branch built a display around the new content, helping readers find and enjoy thrillers they never knew existed.

"I'm really glad I have this tool," Sullivan says. "I really believe it's going to help a lot of libraries where staffing is becoming an issue and selection is becoming an issue. We really need to know what our customers are using so we can give it to them. If we don't do that, we're going to be less relevant than we would like to be."

Phoenix Public Library
'Book Replacement Project' – A Timeline.



saveTIME



saveMONEY



improve
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