

COLLECTIONHQ HELPS SAVE MONEY AT SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY



San Francisco Public Library is a 28 branch system with 5 bookmobiles serving a population of over 800,000. Implementing regular weeding and gaining more granular knowledge of the collections to improve collection management were priorities for management at the library. Management was also intrigued by the possibilities of gaining more use of existing collections via the transfer process. collectionHQ was implemented at the library in November 2011 to help assist with those goals.

San Francisco Public Library

THE CHALLENGE

Previous to implementing collectionHQ at San Francisco Public Library one of the key challenges was coordinating system wide weeding procedures across the 28 branches. Collections & Cataloging Manager Shellie Cocking explains that “we did have detailed weeding guidelines but no way to track how people were following them and what condition their collection was in.” Although weeding lists could be manipulated from the library’s ILS system, Millennium, these were not efficient to run and not all staff were comfortable creating and using them.

Another difficulty was creating a streamlined process for transferring items from branch to branch which was considered an effective means of saving money by making the most of available materials. The process before collectionHQ was to send those items classed as dead to a central “redistribution” unit, or to offer them via email to other locations. However Cocking comments that both of these processes were “cumbersome” and inefficient and the redistribution unit option required staff to compile a list of what they needed monthly then travel out to that central location.

The effect of these obstacles meant that management were intrigued by collectionHQ after hearing about the product through the Urban Library Council and attending a seminar at an ALA Conference. Then following a recommendation from the library’s ‘Collection Committee’, a group made up of librarians from across the branches, administration decided to take on collectionHQ to overcome those challenges.

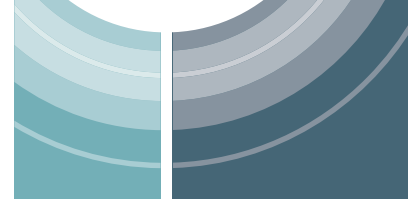
THE OUTCOME

STREAMLINED PROCESSES | Complicated weeding and transfer processes at San Francisco Public Library have been eliminated thanks to the help of collectionHQ. Detailed reports on what dead and grubby materials should be removed from or transferred within the collection can now be pulled directly by staff which will allow Cocking and team to implement a regular weeding schedule which they can monitor on an ongoing basis.

Cocking describes this new and improved process “Grubby refresh is great and that’s where we can see that we are saving money because people don’t pull the dead items until they know that everyone has had a chance at them. I just love now that we can set standards, have a schedule and I can track them all.”

collectionHQ has also helped to improve the process for managing the floating AV collection at the library. As an urban system with most patrons in transit, staff find that a lot of holds for AV material are placed

COLLECTION PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT



KEY BENEFITS

The adoption of collectionHQ has allowed San Francisco Public Library to:

- Streamline weeding processes.
- Ensure consistent movement of their floating collection.
- Avoid wasteful purchases.
- Better manage supply with demand.
- Increase circulation.



at those branches close to the subway or the grocery store which is where they are subsequently returned. Cocking explains that this “collection drift” means that material may then not move from those branches for a long period of time. She goes on to describe how collectionHQ has helped with this challenge “we set collection checks at every 60 days so that anything which hasn’t circulated in 60 days they (the staff) look for it. If they find it they offer these up to other branches.” The staff also use “dead item refresh” to identify any items which circulated well until they reached that branch. Cocking comments “We use those reports to move those items along.”

FINANCIAL SAVINGS | As implementation of collectionHQ proceeds, San Francisco Public Library is beginning to better target its collection’s budget and achieve higher use of its existing collections because of better weeding, transfer processes and the avoidance of wasteful purchases facilitated by collectionHQ reports.

Cocking describes a project in which the library used collectionHQ to focus spending better on those popular yet under-represented areas. “We do an annual survey asking branches what they think of the collection and which areas they feel they need more material in. We purchase by committee so branches don’t select individually.” The consensus amongst staff in this case was that the travel section was under-stocked and so Cocking ran system-wide reports from collectionHQ to see which countries each branch was lacking in. With the information from these reports, Cocking outlines that she “has created a chart for the committee when they are gridding for branches and this included the turnover rates in travel areas that we keep internally from what the branch staff said.” The committee can then buy books based on the evidence from collectionHQ combined with branch feedback and cancel standing orders for the items they don’t need.

Overall, when reflecting on the financial savings made with the help of collectionHQ, Cocking comments “I think it pays for itself very quickly, that’s the nice part about it. You save more than you spend on the product.”

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENTS | Overall collectionHQ has supported the improvement of the collection performance across San Francisco Public Library thanks to supplying reports for the clean-up of dead and grubby materials as well as providing better insight into patron demand.

In terms of the collection clean up, since implementing collectionHQ, Cocking highlights the better physical condition of books in the library which can be seen from the 26% reduction of the grubby list at one branch, which historically had struggled to get rid of poor performing items.

As for development of the collection more in line with patron demand, Cocking provides the example of improved allocation of budget to non-fiction material “We have a healthy collection budget and spent a lot of that on non-fiction last year but this is mostly overstocked so we are using this information in the committee to cut down on the areas that don’t show as under-stocked and how many titles we are purchasing for non-fiction.” By managing the budget this way based on collectionHQ evidence the library can now justify buying less of what patrons aren’t checking out and more on those items which the software proves has a high circulation.

The positive results of using collectionHQ to develop and manage the collection are not only felt by staff but can be seen from improvements in circulation. collectionHQ reports drawn from the performance of the first 7 branches where the software was rolled out revealed that the transfer of 139 books which had been dead on an average of 12 months have now received an additional 163 circulations.

Cocking is delighted with this result and looks forward to watching this trend of improvements continue across the library system!

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