

COLLECTIONHQ SUPPORTS BETTER PURCHASING DECISIONS AT NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY



New York
Public
Library

New York Public Library (NYPL) is a 90 branch system serving a population of over 3,000,000. Gaining insight into the reading trends of different communities to plan the budget at the library was not straightforward and so collectionHQ was taken on in 2010 to enhance this amongst other tasks. It has since proven an indispensable tool at the library.

THE CHALLENGE

Prior to the implementation of collectionHQ, New York Public Library (NYPL) faced the challenge of ensuring centralized ordering was accurate and substantial for the 90 sites. Assistant Director of Branch Collection Development, Miriam Tuliao reveals that this task relied on "staff knowledge of collections on a local level" which was prone to human error.

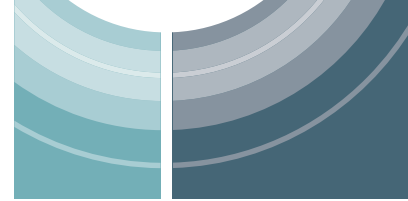
Daily management of the collection was also a challenge for the library branches as Tuliao explains "sometimes they don't know what types of materials to anticipate arriving because we buy pre-publications 3-5 months in advance." Therefore, being aware of what books to prepare for and managing the volume that comes through in addition to the floating items was difficult.

Tuliao continues that the creation of ILS reports to help with those tasks was not feasible as it would not only be a "daunting" task for branch staff to "wand every item to check performance" but generating unique reports for each individual branch on how the collection was performing was "too time consuming" for the ILS office.

After receiving feedback about collectionHQ from a number of staff members who had attended conferences and from discussions with other libraries, Tuliao describes it became evident that the software would help to "fine tune collection development and anticipate needs of the readership in New York which is really broad."

THE OUTCOME

STEAMLINED PROCESSES | After adopting collectionHQ at NYPL, staff got straight to work on auditing the current collection and cleaning up where necessary. Tuliao elaborates "it has helped us with inventory from day one to really get a sense of what is truly here and what is not." This clean up then allowed the staff to better identify any dead or grubby stock which they could get rid of or transfer to a branch where those less popular items may receive higher circulation. In terms of moving materials around, Tuliao also highlights that in-depth collectionHQ reports which reveal on a branch level how each item performs in terms of circulation, have facilitated performance improvements across the floating collection. For example, within the system there are particular branches where due to their location near office blocks, many patrons treat them as "drop off points" and so quite often materials will pool there but then not be checked out again for a long period of time. collectionHQ reports help to identify those items at the branches in question and then decide which branches they should be sent to that are under stocked or have a high demand for those materials.



KEY BENEFITS

The adoption of collectionHQ has enabled New York Public Library to:

- Gain a better understanding of current inventory.
- Avoid 'pooling' of items at certain branches through floating.
- Manage spending based on customer demand.
- Introduce regular marketing and promotion activities.
- Increase circulation.



Overall the movement of materials across the system and the weeding of dead and grubby items have both been greatly facilitated thanks to the ease of which branch staff can run collectionHQ reports. Tuliao explains that this factor allows a more “democratic access to the information” rather than the requesting reports from the ILS office.

MORE INFORMED PURCHASING DECISIONS | Improved reporting thanks to collectionHQ has also greatly assisted with collection development by highlighting where budget should be allocated in terms of what items are most popular and which branches are under stocked. Tuliao explains “The system wide popular author summary presents not only popular authors across the branches but current holdings and circulation that was received as a result of those, how many we had on loan and how many we needed to achieve our target which helped with the distribution plan for the year and enabled us to properly invest money so that we are not in a situation where we are over stocked in an author’s work and need to work more heavily in promoting that in displays and reader’s advisory because we bought too much.”

Once those items have been determined, Tuliao and team can then monitor their performance through collectionHQ reports to make the necessary “tweaks” should they find themselves under stocked or overstocked in any collection.

Overall, the major attribute of this insight from collectionHQ Tuliao believes is “that it has helped us understand the local and system wide need of our customers and respond better to what is being requested. We have a responsibility with the public to invest in books and materials that meet diverse community needs. This tool has given us the opportunity to better realize that goal.”

BETTER CUSTOMER INSIGHT | Collection knowledge across the branches has been enhanced to such an extent that staff can now experiment with different promotional techniques using collectionHQ top author and top genre reports. Tuliao explains that “as soon as they (the branch staff) get a sense of what types of books are resonating with their community, for example which authors are most popular for adult, teen and child, they can do displays and focus their reader’s advisory services by really working with information based on reader tastes of that particular community.” One such display was a “read-a-like” promotion where the staff identified less known authors from genres which had proven to be popular with their community. This has helped to expose those authors to new audiences and has in turn helped to increase circulation for those items.

collectionHQ reports have also exposed some surprises to staff in terms of genres they were not aware were popular to such a level with patrons. Tuliao explains “It’s been eye-opening for a lot of the neighborhood branches the types of genres in fiction that are resonating with their community”. One of those revelations has been the growing popularity of “urban fiction” beyond the African-American community. In addition to this genre, the popularity of romance within adult fiction and the Manga series for teens have become apparent and have prompted the library to invest more heavily in those specific materials as opposed to more general fiction.

Overall better community knowledge and improved collection management thanks to collectionHQ have together resulted in higher circulation - an increase of over 370,000 between fiscal years 2011 and 2012. Tuliao concludes “For the second year we have had an olympic year in terms of high circulation and so a combination of buying right and managing and promoting right, is very evident especially since we introduced the tool in 2010 both fiscal years 2010 and 2011 had really good years in terms of overall circulation.”



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