

# PHOENIX PUBLIC LIBRARY MAXIMIZES VENDOR SELECTION WITH EVIDENCE.

## VENDOR SELECTION

Vendor Selection takes place when a library chooses to outsource the selection process to suppliers. Librarians who use this technique create profiles listing the materials required at their library which are then sent to the vendor. Using the profiles, vendor selectors can ensure that the library receives the right quantities of current and forthcoming items which meet those criteria and are within the library's budget.



## VENDOR SELECTION & PHOENIX PUBLIC LIBRARY

### Background

Phoenix Public Library, Arizona, is 17 branch library system with a circulating collection of 1.3 million items.

One of the U.S.A's first patron-centric libraries, Phoenix Public Library has a proven history of empowering vendors to provide improved service levels and has been using Vendor Selection since 2004 with 2 main suppliers – Baker & Taylor and Mid-West Tapes.

Having previously assigned selectors at each branch to perform the selection process, it was decided that this was not best use of staff time. Collection Development Coordinator with Phoenix, Kathleen Sullivan reflects "having selectors in each branch wasn't working – we needed that staff for other front-line services." As a result, senior management made the decision to involve the trained Collection Development Librarians employed by vendors in the selection of new material. Kathleen explains that this decision was well received as vendor lists supplied to the library previously for selection of materials to new branches had included items that were not in the system or which were upcoming and not on the library's radar: "We wanted to take the expertise that vendor librarians have with the publishing market – what is going to be hot and what's not – and use that to select our materials."

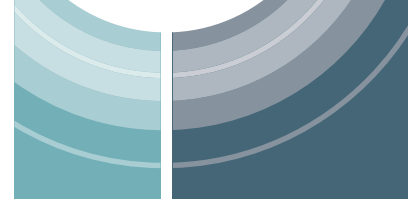
### The Process

The roll out of Vendor Selection at Phoenix Public Library involved Kathleen and a colleague from the Collection Development department along with 6 librarians. Together this team would review the selection list and provide feedback to the vendors on the success of each selection. During the roll-out stage, the team monitored profiles closely, making changes where necessary to ensure the system worked as well as possible. A rule was also established that the vendor selectors would keep the library up-to-date with titles due for release in the next 3 – 6 months; as a result, these items would be available in the catalogue when patrons wanted them.

Kathleen explains that since the roll-out of Vendor Selection 9 years ago, "A great deal of trust has been built up with the vendor" and whenever a new vendor selector comes on board, a close relationship is formed to ensure that they understand the library's requirements and "idiosyncrasies." Consequently, vendor selectors will notify the library of a popular area that the catalogue requires more of, or an area that does not require so much focus; the library can then adjust the profile accordingly.

### The Benefits

Overall, Vendor Selection has proven a real asset to the team at Phoenix Public Library and Kathleen considers there to be 3 main benefits of the practice.



## KEY BENEFITS

### Introducing Evidence to Vendor Selection:

- Streamlines the selection process
- Equips library catalog with current and forthcoming titles
- Avoids wasteful purchases
- Enables selection automation with ESP – Evidence-based Selection Planning



First is the assurance that the library catalogue is up-to-date with upcoming materials, "Materials are appearing in our catalogue early enough that when customers think to look for them they are already there, so it makes us look awfully good – like we are right on top of the market."

Secondly, Vendor Selection helps the library to deal with limited resources by allowing library staff to focus on front line services while "committed vendor librarians" take care of selection.

The third advantage is the vendor's knowledge of the market. Kathleen explains "Our vendor librarians have their finger on the pulse of the market in a much more detailed way than we ever could have. They have the expertise to use their catalogues in ways that we just don't have the staff or time to do."

#### Vendor Selection and collectionHQ

Until 2011, building collection profiles that outlined accurate quantities of the right materials relied heavily on staff knowledge which could be time consuming to gather and was not always accurate.

Fortunately, global collection improvement software, collectionHQ was introduced at Phoenix Public Library in 2011 which meant that, for the first time, staff had access to evidence-based collection analysis at a system wide and branch level; regional trends; action plans outlining how to improve collection performance; and much more.

This level of analysis offered by collectionHQ has now made the tool an intrinsic feature of vendor selection

at the library, particularly in the replacement of materials. Kathleen describes "We have been using collectionHQ to help inform vendor selection...in financial year 2012 we ran a collection use summary report for one of our libraries and from that we developed a profile of what we wanted our vendors to send to us – it worked very well and we managed to accomplish in weeks what would have taken a month and a half to 2 months just to develop the profile. We were then able to complete selection in 3 months rather than the usual 9 month period."

Kathleen continues that collectionHQ has been a real "eye-opener" for staff at the library, revealing detail that was not available before and helping to identify items they had not been aware were so popular with patrons. This level of analysis allows profiles to be more reflective of reading trends across the library system, maximizing the selection process.

#### THE FUTURE

##### ESP – Evidence-based Selection Planning

The introduction of collectionHQ evidence into Vendor Selection has proven a vital component of the process, encouraging the launch of a new service from Baker & Taylor - Evidence-based Selection Planning (ESP).

ESP has the potential to revolutionize collection development by automating the distribution of collectionHQ evidence to Baker & Taylor Collection Development Services which will use the information to select the right quantity of current and forthcoming titles, relevant to each library's circulation trends and budget. The service will streamline the purchasing process by eliminating the requirement for librarians to create and send lengthy collection profiles to Baker & Taylor.

Kathleen's first thoughts on ESP are that the automation between collectionHQ evidence and Baker & Taylor will help greatly and free up more resources. What's more, the inclusion of evidence removes guesswork from the selection process and will help vendors know the collection areas to concentrate on: "Having the evidence of not just what people want but what they respond to is critical in budget planning."



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