



CASE STUDY

CURATING AN INCLUSIVE COLLECTION AT EVANSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY



*save*TIME



*save*MONEY



*improve*PERFORMANCE



The Evanston Public Library in Illinois is a single-branch library system serving a population of around 75,000. The library hosts a large collection of 375,000 items which receives high circulation from its community of readers. Evanston is home to a diverse population, so the delivery of an inclusive collection is an important goal for the library.

THE CHALLENGE

Prior to implementing collectionHQ, the Evanston Public Library lacked an efficient process for carrying out regular collection improvements. Betsy Bird, Collection Development Manager, reported that the Non-Fiction collection was “huge and very old” and so the library sought a solution that would empower staff to efficiently weed this collection and support a data-driven approach to collection development.



THE SOLUTION

collectionHQ analyzes data from the library's ILS to ascertain how the collection is being used by the community. It then delivers action plans to help staff optimize the collection for readers based on demand. The Evanston Public Library joined collectionHQ as one of the software's first early adopter customers to support improvements to its Non-Fiction collection. More than ten years later, the library remains an avid user having identified collectionHQ as an easy-to-use tool that helps to increase collection usage and measure improvements.

THE RESULTS

ENHANCED DISPLAYS TO INCREASE CIRCULATION

collectionHQ's action plans help staff to quickly identify "dead" books that are poorly circulating in their current location or are "Dead on Arrival (DOA)". Dead On Arrival considers newly purchased items that have been added to the collection in the previous 6 to 18 months that don't achieve more than one circulation.

Betsy uses the action plans to identify opportunities to promote these books in a display, giving them another chance instead of replacing or removing them.

Betsy explains, "We have what we call the whole book approach. It doesn't make much sense to me to do an equity assessment and then weed out all the books, so collectionHQ lets me highlight books in a way that I wouldn't be able to do otherwise. We've redone the entire adult fiction side so that every section has a display per shelf. There are always two to three books on display in each section of, for example, the fiction, the science fiction, the large print, the mysteries, the short stories. We promote the DOA items first as we want those on display the most, and then once they're taken, we replace them with dead items."

To draw attention to these displayed books, Betsy will feature small "shelf talkers" beside the display with a written description of the book or a staff recommendation. She will sometimes feature a QR code on this shelf talker to help patrons access the database for that collection. Betsy commented, "My goal is to try to make this much more of a bookstore experience. People love staff picks, and they love shelf talkers."

This approach has helped to reduce the library's DOA from 17.5% in December 2022 to 14.1% in January 2024 and ensure that money spent on the library's collection goes further.

BETTER USE OF SPACE

Increased circulation and a more refined collection supported by collectionHQ have helped to create additional space in the library for the team to curate appealing and accessible shelves for readers.

Betsy reported, "We have a lot more space and hope to reduce the sight lines because they're very tall shelves, and people have been objecting to how tall they are. It's not equitable for all users to reach up high."

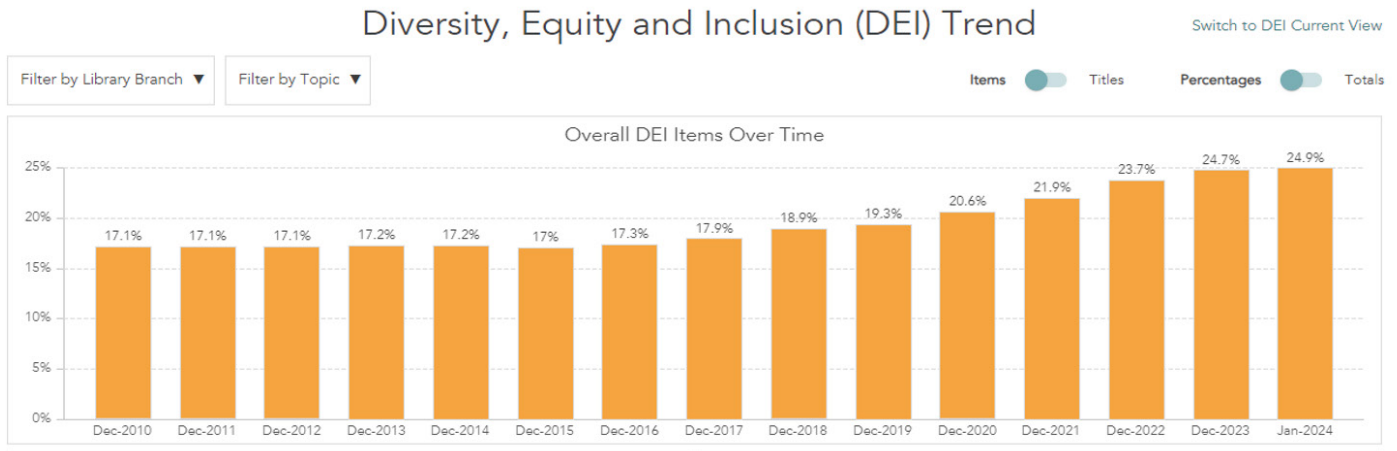
EASIER TO IDENTIFY CORE MATERIAL

collectionHQ offers flexible targets and parameters to offer users more control over the material that is presented in weeding action plans. At Evanston Public Library, Betsy uses this functionality to extend the number of years that items identified by collectionHQ as diverse, equitable, and inclusive (DEI) have the opportunity to circulate before they are flagged as "dead."

Betsy uses collectionHQ's DEI Analysis tool to monitor the impact of this approach and how it supports the library's goal of providing a more inclusive collection for all readers. She reports,



“I’m constantly checking the DEI statistics, and they have consistently gone up every month.” In fact, since the DEI Analysis tool was first added to collectionHQ in 2021, the representation of DEI material at Evanston Public Library has increased from 21.9% in December 2021 to 24.9% in January 2024.



DEI Analysis also enables users to “self-classify” items as DEI, offering the option to tailor the information to local needs.

collectionHQ makes finding these core items in the collection easy thanks to its “barcode search” function. Users can enter the barcode of any book pulled from the shelf and instantly see key information about that item, such as whether it is a last copy, DEI, dead, “grubby,” and more. This helps staff make efficient and informed decisions when managing the collection.

Betsy commented, “I’ve been using the barcode search like crazy. It’s so much more efficient!”

PROMOTING THE LIBRARY TO STAKEHOLDERS

collectionHQ offers users a customizable Dashboard to present information about their collection in a series of visual charts and graphs.

Betsy described how she uses this Dashboard, “I think it’s a really good idea to show improvements in areas, and collectionHQ lets you do that better than pretty much any other program. These graphs are pre-made, and it’s nice how easy it is to download them. I’ll use them in a slide show presentation for my board or annual report or stats for the local newspaper and it shows how we’re improving. I have done some talks with our local newspaper, and they just love the idea of books being saved rather than weeded.”

As illustrated by the examples in this case study, collectionHQ continues to support the team at Evanston Public Library in their mission to make fiscally responsible decisions about their collection and ensure that all members of the community are represented.



KEY BENEFITS

Reduce the percentage of dead and DOA items.

Create evidence-based displays.

Increase circulation.

Improve inclusivity of collection.