CIVICA

Spydus delivers SMART libraries a collaborative model that fulfills all its needs – at a reduced cost

Thinking outside the box to forge a new multi-library framework, the local government libraries that form the SMART network have gained everything and lost nothing - working together while remaining separate entities.

SMART – an acronym coined by the five foundational members over a decade ago, stands for –Sharing and Managing a Region Together', and still works as their proxy mission statement. Moving beyond a proof of concept, this new model is a success story on every level, attracting an additional neighbouring local government library, with more on the horizon.

SMART's original group of New Zealand libraries – Porirua City, Masterton District, Weltec and Hutt City, came together in 2010 when Spydus moved to a managed services platform - opening up a raft of opportunities for this group of forward-thinking libraries.

Brian Anderson, Manager, City Libraries at Porirua (a local government area that boarders with Wellington) and SMART library advocate has a long history with both Porirua City Library and Spydus – witnessing many innovations during this time. A librarian by trade, Brian has always dabbled in technology and for the last three decades has been able to combine these two passions for the benefit of the local community.

"In 1988 when I joined Porirua City Library, it had an earlier version of Spydus running on a mainframe – the size of two fridges." An early adopter - always wanting to be at the forefront of technology, Brian's vision was to provide customers with a better user experience, extending beyond the confines of what his library service could offer.

When Civica announced that Spydus was moving onto a managed services platform back in 2010, it's not surprising that Brian was excited by the opportunities this platform would bring.

"14 years ago, when Civica's managed services came up, we got together with other like-minded libraries and thought - wouldn't it be cool if we could cooperate as a group - leveraging each other's resources without having to get into a huge legal entity," Brian noted.

"We kept it simple, just a memorandum of commitment, basically an agreement to share our catalogues and sit on the same platform, while keeping our own legal entities separate – as before."

Moving beyond the traditional interlibrary loan, SMART customers can visit their library and reserve a book from the combined catalogue, providing the same experience of borrowing an item from their own local library.

"If you search through your local library for an item, Spydus - through its hidden magic, lets our customers see one huge catalogue that is a combined catalogue from 6 library services," Brian explained. "Someone in Carterton, a town of 6000 people, can go to their local library (part of Wairarapa Library service) and access around 400,000 titles."

Key Outcomes

1 Enhanced collaboration and resource sharing

2 Reduced IT infrastructure costs and improved operational efficiency

3 Improved user experience with broader access to shared library collections

"We love our independence, but we do want to cooperate – Spydus has made this possible."

Brian Anderson, Manager, Porirua City Library

For most librarians, the hassle of running IT infrastructure – such as on-premise servers, is not something that is ever missed when a library moves to managed services or a software as a service (SaaS) platform. This was the case for Brian too.

"None of us were experienced in running hardware, so when we moved to managed services a major irritation point was removed, while making us more secure," Brian noted."We didn't have to worry about disaster recovery, power cuts or backups – which I particularly hated.

We also knew that the managed services version would give us the functionality we were looking for at a price we could afford. Each library service has a separate contract, but because we moved to managed services as a group, we saved about 10% on our previous cost – making it very attractive. Also, no longer having to maintain the infrastructure was, and still is great."

Taking advantage of the new Spydus modules

SMART has recently started to utilise newer Spydus modules, such as the Archive Module, making the storing and accessing of their heritage material - such as local history photos and indexed newspapers, significantly easier. Residents can do a search on a person, or a topic, and instantly any relevant documents held by the library will appear.

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Conclusion

The SMART model has delivered all the benefits they had hoped for, with customers appreciating the significantly wider choice across the collaboration and the ability to drop in and loan items at libraries outside of their home city.

In the past year alone 12% of all loans across SMART libraries (186,569 items) were between individual SMART libraries - a mix of unique items only held at one library and high demand titles held by all, making much more efficient use of all their collections.

"Our customers certainly like what we're doing," Brian said." At the time of putting together SMART, Spydus seemed to be the only product that would allow us to have our collaboration structure instead of a completely merged consortia. This is why SMART exists, because it wasn't hard – we didn't have to jump through a bunch of hoops to make it happen. We could still be separate operationally but share in the background everything else. We have no plans to move, we're happy to stay with Spydus.

"We really liked the technology behind Spydus, so we wanted to play as hard as we can in that space."

Brian Anderson, Manager, Porirua City Library

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5
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