



Stirling Library Service improve stock performance using smartsm™

KEY BENEFITS

The adoption of smartsm has enabled Stirling Library Service to:

- Save time and effort involved in improving stock relevance and quality
- Redirect staff effort towards delivering higher value services
- Save money by reducing unnecessary stock spend
- Significantly reduce levels of dead and grubby stock across the Service

Stirling Council Library Service needed a solution to improve stock performance across all of their libraries, and help them get better value for money from new and existing stock. They turned to smartsm™, the software application from Bridgeall Libraries based on Evidence Based Stock Management (EBSM™), to help them meet their goals.

THE CHALLENGE

Stirling faced challenges familiar to many public library services. Finding enough staff time to maintain stock on an ongoing basis was difficult when faced with the sheer volume of work involved. It was suspected that gaps in provision existed in relation to demand, and redundant stock was present on shelves, but the information required to enable the librarians to make the best stock decisions was not readily available. Budgets were under pressure, so a cost-effective solution was needed.

Upon investigation of the proven EBSM methodology, Stirling realised the importance of using hard evidence to support decisions around stock performance improvement and purchasing. If this complex task could be done accurately and cost-effectively, it would help ensure stock was in line with customer demand and so address the problem of falling issues, all the while ensuring best value was being delivered.

Stirling sought the best solution available to help them overcome their challenges. They chose smartsm - the only application to implement the EBSM toolset to deliver stock performance improvement.

THE OUTCOME

TIME SAVINGS

smartsm provided Stirling with the transparency needed to prioritise the key areas of improvement, in an organised and structured manner. "It allowed us to focus staff time on those areas where it could be best utilised", explained Robert Ruthven, Library and Archives Service Manager. Stirling concentrated initially on reducing the amount of dead stock (stock which is no longer being borrowed by customers) and grubby stock (stock which is of poor physical quality) on the shelves. smartsm provided action plans to help staff prioritise which titles to remove. The task of identifying dead and grubby stock can be time consuming. With smartsm, it now takes minutes. This allows staff time to be freed up on activities such as stock promotion and improving front line services to customers.

In addition, using these tools has acted as a de facto stock check for those areas of stock Stirling chose to concentrate on improving first, thereby saving staff time that otherwise normally would have been required to achieve this.

FINANCIAL SAVINGS

smartsm makes use of the Software as a Service (SaaS) model of application deployment. As a result, no hardware needs to be purchased - the software application is hosted on Bridgeall Libraries' hardware and accessed over the internet. Stirling, like all smartsm customers, pays an annual subscription fee for use of the smartsm service. Regular enhancements and upgrades are included as part of the service. This helps to reduce the overall cost of ownership. Robert Ruthven explained, "Only 2-3 hours of our IT department's time was needed to implement smartsm. Our internal IT department were very supportive and this all resulted in a quick implementation".

As smartsm identifies stock that can be transferred from one library to another, based on local demand, it is also a good way of reducing the overall amount of stock that needs to be purchased. Stirling have been able to take advantage of this feature when considering book purchases. They have also recently moved towards the centralised selection of stock, to increase the efficiency of selection and release staff time. The information provided by smartsm has helped with this process and allows them to monitor the effectiveness of their selection. smartsm has the flexibility to work hand in hand with both local and centralised purchasing processes, ensuring stock relevance continues to improve at a local level.

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENTS

Stirling has already succeeded in improving the levels of service to their customers through improvements in both stock quality and stock relevance. In less than a year, the number of copies of dead titles on shelves throughout the service has fallen by 17%, whilst the number of copies of grubby titles has fallen by 31%. Stirling fully expects this downward trend to continue as it gets closer to achieving its' own performance targets, which it has defined within smartsm's performance management framework.

The customer experience has been further improved by making better use of space freed up from the removal of redundant stock. This extra space has been used to create face-on, bookshop-style displays of titles which has met with the positive approval of both staff and customers. The extra space can also be used to promote marketing campaigns within the libraries.

EBSM is a stock performance improvement methodology which is continuous in nature, and Stirling has successfully embarked on the early stages of improvement by concentrating on adult fiction titles. However, the Library Service is already reaping the benefits, even at this early stage. Robert is delighted with progress so far, stating, "we already have clear evidence of rising issues, and as we continue to expand our use of EBSM and smartsm, we anticipate realising significant further performance gains."

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EBSM™ is the complete library stock performance improvement methodology, which analyses historic and current information about stock use, to help librarians save time and money, improve stock performance and align stock with local demand.

smartsm™ is the software application which implements the EBSM™ methodology to help libraries achieve stock performance excellence. It is implemented using the Software as a Service model of application deployment. Customers pay an annual subscription to access the service.

