



smartsm™ and RFID drive stock management efficiencies at Westminster

KEY BENEFITS

smartsm integration with the RFID system at Westminster Library has delivered significant benefits to the Service to date, including

- Reducing time taken to perform stock management tasks
- Enabling libraries to perform stock activities more efficiently
- Saving money by reducing wasted spend
- Improving the quality and relevance of stock
- Reducing the impact on IT staff in preparing RFID compatible reports

City of Westminster Library Service has long understood the importance of making best use of technology to drive service improvement and efficiencies. It adopted the smartsm™ software solution to improve the performance of its' stock, and to help achieve significant time and financial savings around the whole area of stock management, with the ultimate goal of improving the service offered to customers.

smartsm's performance driven framework was seen as an important ingredient in helping to achieve this goal. Based on the proven principles of Evidence Based Stock Management (EBSM™), it allowed Westminster to set targets for a range of key performance indicators across their fiction and non-fiction collections.

THE CHALLENGE

Westminster chose to implement an Intellident RFID system within their service. They were seeing the benefits of self-issue machines, but were also interested in driving further value out of their investment in RFID by looking at how they could incorporate stock management processes into the technology.

Catherine Cooke, Projects and Development Co-ordinator at Westminster Library Service, states, "RFID was being used widely to implement self-issue in many library services, but we were also very keen to explore how effective it could be in the area of stock management." Catherine continues, "we knew our handheld RFID scanners had the potential to save considerable staff time if a way could be found of getting useful, relevant stock performance information out of the LMS system and into the devices."

THE OUTCOME

TIME SAVINGS

smartsm produces a range of different Action Plans which library staff use to carry out various stock related activities at the shelves. Importing this information into the handheld scanners was the first task that had to be performed.

Conventionally, this would involve requesting a custom data extract to be written, using the LMS as the source. Assuming IT staff had capacity to do this, once specified, this extract would then need to be prioritised in relation to other outstanding work requests. It would also have to conform to the file format that the RFID handheld device would accept. Furthermore, for the RFID handhelds to be genuinely useful, it was important that frontline staff had easy access to this data so that it could be run by the end-user whenever it was required and at a moments notice.

Catherine states, "smartsm provides all of the functionality that we need to do this. The beauty of smartsm is that users can very easily and quickly generate a flexible data extract and download this to a scanner without the need for IT or Systems Librarians to intervene." smartsm has the ability to create a wide range of Action Plans compatible with handheld scanners from all of the leading RFID vendors, including 2CQR, 3M, D-Tech and Intellident.

At Westminster, the time involved in setting up smartsm to work with their RFID solution was minimal. As Catherine describes, "I was surprised by how little effort was required to integrate the RFID handheld devices and smartsm. Once smartsm is installed, downloading the smartsm Action Plans to the scanners typically takes a couple of minutes."

With smartsm, users were able to carry out a full stock check in a fraction of the time that it would normally take. Catherine explains, "we managed to complete a full stock check of Marylebone Adult Fiction in 3½ hours. Without smartsm and its integration with the RFID scanners, this would have taken more than 2 or 3 times as long."



FINANCIAL SAVINGS AND PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENTS

As a result of the speed and efficiency with which stock issues can now be addressed, staff now have much more time to carry out other value-add activities, including performing more customer-focused work. “The effective increase in staff capacity that smartsm brings adds real value to the service, as our people can now free up that time to spend on other important tasks that improve customer service,” says Catherine.

In addition, the flexibility that smartsm provides also results in considerable financial savings. The numerous Action Plans available within smartsm as standard each represent a significant cost saving compared with the IT department writing a bespoke extract for each one, and managing the execution of these extracts on behalf of the users. RFID-enabled Action Plans can be run directly by users, for a given library, and a given collection or group of collections, thus reducing the cost of IT to service these requests from the libraries. Catherine adds, “from an IT perspective, not only does smartsm reduce the cost to deliver this type of functionality, but as smartsm is providing this information from its own database, this does away with the reporting bottlenecks that can all too often develop on the LMS system.”

The use of smartsm combined with RFID has significantly increased the frequency with which stock management tasks on shelves can be performed. This makes it easier to ensure that the catalogue is accurate, and that stock is both of a high quality and relevant to local demand, contributing to improved stock performance.

One common problem was books marked as missing in the catalogue, where the only way to verify the true picture previously was to check the entire library manually to see if this was correct. Westminster have found that using smartsm in conjunction with the handheld RFID scanners, they were quickly able to find 7% of stock previously marked as missing. Without this facility, replacement copies of these books may well have been purchased in error, and would have represented wasted spend. As a direct result, Westminster estimates that savings of 8 thousand pounds per annum can be attributed to this feature alone.

As a further example of the efficiencies and performance improvements that smartsm brings, an Action Plan was used to address the problem of Dead Stock at Marylebone. One member of staff was able to identify all adult fiction stock which was not issuing in this library, and remove 148 books from a total stock of 5000, all within the space of 1½ hours. Catherine states, “not only is this much easier and quicker to do now, we have managed to dramatically improve the relevance of stock at Marylebone.”

Catherine adds, “we are delighted that we have been able to realise real benefits using these technologies, and that we have been able to move beyond self-issue to help further improve the service we offer to our customers.”

Bridgeall Libraries Limited
1 Ainslie Road,
Hillington Park
Glasgow, G52 4RU
tel: 0141 585 6427, fax 0141 585 6301
e: contactus@smartsm.com
www.smartsm.com

EBSM™ is the complete library stock 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.

