



Adoption of smartsm™ improves Poole's stock performance

KEY BENEFITS

smartsm has delivered significant benefits to Poole Library Service to date, including

- Improvement in catalogue quality
- Better stock quality and relevance
- Automatic identification of demand gaps
- More efficient use of staff time in relation to stock management
- Targeted spending on stock purchases
- Helping to achieve Best Value

Borough of Poole Library Service has always been keen to embrace change, innovation and best practice to improve the service it delivers to its customers. As part of the drive to achieve this goal, Poole adopted Bridgeall Libraries' smartsm™ software, which uses the principles of Evidence Based Stock Management (EBSM™) to address issues surrounding stock performance and service improvement across the whole of their Library Service.

THE CHALLENGE

Over the years, Poole consistently sought to find the best approach to managing its stock more effectively but, as time progressed, felt it could still be doing more. As John Lane, Library Services Manager explains, "we had adopted a very proactive model of stock circulation when Poole became a unitary authority back in 1997. The experience had initially been positive, but there was a growing feeling that this approach was no longer sophisticated enough."

To improve customer service it was important to ensure stock was not only more relevant to customers' needs at a local level, but also of sufficient quality. "What we knew we really needed was a way of making judgements about stock based on hard data rather than relying on the intuitions of staff," John states.

The Library Service was also keen to focus budget spend on the most appropriate areas, as it was increasingly important to show that best value was being achieved. Finding a way to enable intelligent swapping of stock between branch libraries, thus reducing unnecessary spend, would help towards achieving this. After careful evaluation, smartsm was identified as the best solution.

THE OUTCOME

TIME SAVINGS

An early benefit obtained with the introduction of smartsm was the ability to quickly identify Poole's catalogue issues. "The accuracy of our catalogue has improved considerably since we started using the tools within smartsm," says John. The effort and time required to cleanse the catalogue using manual stock checks is significant. smartsm reduces this considerably.

An area of frustration for Poole was the time and effort required to obtain useful and detailed stock performance information from their Library Management System (LMS). smartsm provided staff with a pre-defined toolset that quickly and efficiently gave librarians and stock managers access to the detailed analysis needed to make key decisions relating to stock management, helping librarians save time when carrying out stock management tasks.

Using smartsm also reduced the time spent on stock transfers between branches. "There have been considerable time savings realised as a result of moving away from our previous, labour intensive circulation model," John explains. "Initially, front line staff have had to expend effort working through action plans produced by smartsm. However, as our stock continues to improve, this will take much less time." smartsm ensures that any time spent identifying and then moving stock between branches is not wasted effort, as all of this work is based on evidence of usage, and not simply fixed rotation schedules. Identifying demand gaps in this way allows staff to spend more time on front-line activities, adding real value to customers.

FINANCIAL SAVINGS

smartsm has helped Poole to focus spend on those areas most in need of stock replenishment. “smartsm had highlighted a disproportionate amount of Large Print grubby stock within the service. Accordingly we spent significantly more money on this area than we would have otherwise done so,” states John. This targeting of spend on areas previously not regarded as priorities indicates how such detailed analysis can prove a powerful tool in helping to ensure best value is being achieved. John continues, “alternatively, highlighting areas that have traditionally attracted larger spend, despite low levels of use, allows this cash to be freed up to spend on other areas of high-demand stock.”

Poole have also evaluated the cost of purchasing smartsm and compared this to savings they can make using the application. “We were satisfied not only that smartsm was the only tool of its kind, but also that the benefits realised would clearly justify the outlay.” Poole have been actively using the system for just over 6 months, and now that the catalogue is more accurate, are in a position to take further advantage of the financial benefits smartsm brings. John also adds, “the subscription fee based model helped to reduce the initial cost to purchase. This, in conjunction with the regular enhancements and modules Bridgeall Libraries deliver at no extra cost, has helped to maximise the financial benefits.”

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENTS

smartsm offers librarians the flexibility to consider the stock advice it generates and carry out those actions that are most appropriate, given current workloads and constraints. Ultimately, decisions must still be made by librarians. John Lane goes on to explain, “smartsm has enabled staff in all libraries to play a more active role in managing the stock in their library. This has helped significantly in enabling libraries to more accurately meet their local community’s stock requirements.”

“The flexibility to set targets within smartsm for a range of different indicators, and the provision of a performance monitoring framework to guide staff in the right direction are some of smartsm’s greatest strengths,” explains John. “We have made significant strides towards meeting our targets for dead and grubby stock for fiction, and we will embark on doing the same for non-fiction in the coming months.” Poole have already succeeded in reducing the percentage of dead stock items on shelves by 36% and reducing the grubby stock items by 13% over the course of approximately 6 months. Progressively replacing these with fresh stock, customers are benefiting from being able to select material to meet their needs.

Poole are now keen to start employing many of the other tools within smartsm that will help them improve their stock performance further. This includes addressing non-fiction and making use of experimental purchase tracking. The sophisticated inter-branch stock-swapping toolset will also be used to balance supply with actual local demand, thereby reducing wasted spend. John is very pleased with results so far, adding “smartsm now gives us the information we need to make the right decisions about our stock, and how well it is meeting local demand. EBSM is an ongoing process, and we are looking forward to realising significant further cost and performance benefits.”

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.

