

# COLLECTIONHQ FACILITATES SAN DIEGO COUNTY LIBRARY TO SAVE STAFF TIME AND EVOLVE WITH CUSTOMER NEEDS.

San Diego County Library serves a wide variety of customers, in rural and urban settings in areas as diverse as the mountains, desert and coast. To keep pace with their customers' different needs, the library system in 2010 became among the first in the United States to start using collectionHQ, the software tool that applies the principles of Evidence Based Stock Management (EBSM) to library collections.



## THE CHALLENGE

With 33 branches, two bookmobiles and a collection of 1.5 million items, San Diego County Library has a lot of titles to keep up with. Because its collection is fully floating, the library was looking for a way to anticipate the needs of its diverse customer base and utilized its collection in the best way possible. The library moved to a centralized selection system two years ago after years of a more decentralized system.

In addition, the library was seeking a tool that would help it analyze its annual budget by pairing the money it was spending with circulation trends, to make sure that it was allocating money efficiently. It was a painstaking task that had been done manually.

When collectionHQ was first introduced into the U.S. market in 2010, San Diego's library director heard about it and sought to determine if it was the right product for the system's needs. His staff examined collectionHQ's features, purchased it and quickly put it to use.

## THE OUTCOME

**TIME SAVINGS** | As with most library systems, San Diego can't afford to have staff waste time on unproductive tasks. collectionHQ has made librarians in San Diego more efficient, because they now have data and information that was not previously available.

"collectionHQ has provided an opportunity for branch staff to look at data on how their customers are using the collection," says principal librarian Robin Isicson. "Before, a lot of staff felt like they didn't really know what was in their building. collectionHQ helped us put that information back in their hands."

Instead of spending valuable time trying to glean that information, branch staff now can instantly receive reports on circulation trends at their branches. With that information, they can develop programs such as book clubs, and they can design displays of top authors based on actual data from their branch.

"From a staff perspective, it helps them home in so they can make decisions quicker," she says. "They're not worrying about making the right or wrong decision, and each decision takes less time."

COLLECTION PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

## KEY BENEFITS

The adoption of collectionHQ has enabled San Diego County Library to:

- Analyze its annual budget by aligning the money it is spending with circulation trends.
- Save staff time by providing in-depth and automated reports on how customers are using their collection.
- Use evidence to make decisions on how to spend budget by what books are popular with their customers and circulate well.
- Improve stock and ensure items are in line with what customers want to read.
- Identify dead stock and replace accordingly.
- Use thorough knowledge of what customers want to read to enhance marketing activities.



**FINANCIAL SAVINGS** | collectionHQ has helped San Diego County Library ensure that its money is spent wisely. When the system was planning for the opening of two new buildings, the collections staff used collectionHQ to provide a detailed look at what kinds of books in the system circulated most. Traditional library buildings in San Diego allocated about 70 percent of shelf space to Non-Fiction titles. But in looking at what titles were actually circulating, library staff members realized that Fiction works should take the majority of space. They worked with capital projects staff to ensure that shelving reflected customers' book preferences.

San Diego has found similar advantages in budgeting. When spending money, librarians tried to perform what they call a "bang for the buck" calculation – allocating funding to collection areas based on circulation rates. It was hard and often imprecise work, Isicson says. "Before, with the bang-for-the-buck calculation we did by hand, we couldn't tell what types of Fiction were most needed by customers – we only knew that we needed to allocate 35% of our budget to adult and children's Fiction." But now, collectionHQ makes that calculation easy, and it provides far more detail than just Fiction versus Non-Fiction: Librarians now know, for instance, what percentage of their Fiction needs to be mysteries and thrillers.

"We're not buying titles that are just going to sit there, or buying too few copies," says collection development manager Heather Pisani-Kristl. "We can't afford to make bad purchases. We can't afford to have something that might circulate only once or twice. We need every book to circulate multiple times."

Using an evidence-based approach has helped in working with stakeholders such as the county board of supervisors, because librarians are able to explain their budget decisions with data. "When you have the statistics and the data, decisions are not coming from an emotional place," Isicson says.

**PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENTS** | One of the main advantages of using collectionHQ, Pisani-Kristl says, is that it has helped librarians develop a collection that is "dialed in closer to customer interests." The library system recently analyzed its purchases since acquiring collectionHQ and found that 95 percent of items purchased had been subsequently requested by customers. "We're definitely keeping up with what people want to read," she says. She credits collectionHQ with helping keep the library's average item circulating well above its benchmark of six times per year.

The software has also helped alert librarians in San Diego to opportunities to increase circulation with their existing collection. Because the system's collection is fully floating, unread items can stay in one branch for a long time. With collectionHQ, librarians identified 3,817 Non-Fiction books that had not circulated in more than a year and moved them to other branches that might have interested customers. After being in a new branch location for 2-12 months, those previously non-circulating books circulated 6,885 times.

Says Pisani-Kristl: "We wanted to be able to manage where items go based on demonstrated circulation patterns, and now we can."



saveTIME



saveMONEY



improve  
PERFORMANCE

[demo@collectionhq.com](mailto:demo@collectionhq.com) | [www.collectionhq.com](http://www.collectionhq.com)

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