



# CASE STUDY

## SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNCIL LIBRARIES



save**TIME**



save**MONEY**



improve**PERFORMANCE**



## BACKGROUND

*South Gloucestershire Council hosts a 13 branch library system serving a population of more than 280,000. The library was presented the collectionHQ Super Librarian Award in 2019 for achieving outstanding collection performance. This case study will outline the practices applied at South Gloucestershire Libraries which led to this fantastic result.*

## THE CHALLENGE

Like many councils across the United Kingdom, South Gloucestershire endured a period of tough budget cuts since the financial crisis, resulting in service closures and fewer staff. In 2017, the library's mobile service was closed and librarian jobs cut by one third. As a result, one library in South Gloucestershire was passed to volunteers and the hours at all branches were reduced. On top of this, South Gloucestershire Libraries changed LMS in 2016. Combined with fewer staff and dwindling resources, changing LMS resulted in the lack of a collection management process that would maintain the appeal of stock for library users.

## THE SOLUTION

collectionHQ was identified by Robina Prince, Bibliographic Services Librarian, as the tool that would ensure regular and efficient stock management processes, and the development of a collection that reflects the needs of users in South Gloucestershire. By analyzing circulation trends, collectionHQ provides librarians with collection insight and recommended action plans to support improvements to the library service.

## ROLL OUT OF COLLECTIONHQ

South Gloucestershire Libraries were assigned a dedicated collectionHQ Account Manager to support implementation and staff training of the toolset across the branches. Account Manager, David Bishop, spent one day at the library to deliver a training session. During the training session, David worked with Robina and the children's librarian to define targets and parameters to customise collectionHQ to meet the library's goals. Following the session, regular communication with David and use of collectionHQ's online training platform, Academy, helped Robina and the staff to build knowledge and confidence in using the tool.

collectionHQ's Collection Check was the first tool to be applied at the library. Collection Check helps staff to identify stock that is missing or needs to be removed to improve accuracy of the library catalogue.

Collection Check was particularly important at South Gloucestershire Libraries where no stock maintenance had been carried out in 12 months since changing LMS. For this reason, the process took six months, however Robina encouraged staff to persevere as this stage was crucial to supporting future improvements with collectionHQ.



# THE RESULTS

## Improved Weeding Processes

After completing Collection Check, Robina and the team were able to start making measurable improvements with collectionHQ. collectionHQ weeding lists are shared regularly with frontline staff to support the removal of non-circulating “Dead” and overused “Grubby” material.

Robina explains: “I discourage staff from simply withdrawing Dead items from the collection. Instead, I recommend that they assess why an item is not circulating. Perhaps it could be moved to a more visible location or into a display.” Empowering frontline staff to make informed decisions with easy-to-use collectionHQ action plans helps to boost staff morale and increase a sense of shared responsibility for the collection.

## Increased Use of Existing Material

Robina frequently uses the collectionHQ Transfer tool to identify poorly circulating items that might perform better at another location based on local demand. Along with Emma Fisher, Children’s Librarian, Robina selects the titles to be transferred and adds those titles to a list which is then passed to the branch staff who find the items and transfer them. Robina explains that the Transfer tool works especially well for the small community libraries, where frequent library visitors can enjoy discovering new titles thanks to regular collection updates. Thanks to this new process, dead titles have been given a second chance and items transferred between November 2018 and November 2019 generated an additional 9,017 circulations.

The team also maximises existing material with the help of collectionHQ’s Dead on Arrival action plans. Dead on Arrival, or DOA, reports material added to a library collection over a 12 month period which subsequently does not achieve more than one circulation. Using collectionHQ to identify DOA material allows branch staff to pull these items into a display, with some branches using the title “Hidden Treasures”.

## Better Selection Decisions

As well as refreshing existing stock, collectionHQ has also helped to make evidence based decisions when purchasing new material. Robina explains: “I use collectionHQ Spending Plans to organise how we will allocate budget at the start of the financial year.” collectionHQ’s Discovery and Performance tools are used again during the September forecast review to identify high performing titles and areas that are under or over stocked to support the purchase of back stock titles for the rest of the year.





## CONCLUSION

Using evidence with collectionHQ to introduce more efficient weeding processes, improve promotion of existing material, and make intelligent stock movement and purchasing decisions, has greatly improved the collection performance at South Gloucestershire Libraries. The activities described in this case study have helped the library to reduce the percentage of the collection that is DOA by half to 5% - that is 11% lower than the UK average. Robina aims to maintain this low DOA score through regular use of collectionHQ and by monitoring progress with the tool's Dashboard. Encouraging staff buy in is also key to continued success, and so Robina presents Performance statistics from collectionHQ at staff meetings to create healthy competition among branches and to demonstrate how their work with the tool pays off.

Robina summarised the main benefits of collectionHQ: "Right from the start, collectionHQ has helped us with buying and backstocking the books that are needed. Before, we were in the dark about what to buy. collectionHQ also allows branches to take ownership of decisions and make their own improvements by providing user friendly reports and invaluable insight. Finally, the reduction in wasteful purchases and DOA is a huge benefit, and shows that now we are buying the right thing."





**KEY  
BENEFITS**

**Reduced Dead on  
Arrival**

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**Evidence based  
purchasing decisions**

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**Better use of  
existing material**

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**Improved weeding  
processes**