One card library network

SNAPSHOT

Libraries SA implemented a single library management system for all South Australian public libraries, providing users with access to millions of books, DVDs and CDs from libraries across the state and delivering a cost effective platform to drive the success of the South Australian Library Network.

Background

Prior to this initiative public libraries across SA used separate ICT systems to manage their databases. This made it difficult for residents to access resources in other council areas leading many users to join multiple libraries and maintain several library cards. Library resources were distributed unevenly so residents of some Council areas had access to much smaller collections than others.

Many library management systems were becoming obsolete and the cost to local councils to upgrade to new systems was significant.

The initiative

In 2009, the Libraries Board commissioned a report to assess the options for overcoming these issues. The report provided a business case recommending that SA public libraries move to a shared library management system. After considerable preliminary work the One Card system was launched in 2012.

One Card brought together local councils to purchase a single leading edge library management system which would enable residents to access the catalogue and collections of any public library in South Australia.

EVALUATING FOR PUBLIC VALUE

ELEMENT 1
Public value
(impact)

What outcome will be delivered?

ELEMENT 2
Legitimacy and support
(authority)

Whose support is necessary?

ELEMENT 3
Operational capability
(delivery)

How will the outcomes be delivered and who will be responsible?

Public value

Positive social impact: One Card enables library users to access resources from the collections of all public libraries. They can use their local library or one where they work or are holidaying. Users have access to a state wide catalogue of over 3.8 million books, DVDs and magazines and an online reservation system and faster item delivery. The outcome is an improved library service providing equitable access to information, culture and learning for all South Australians.

Increased effectiveness: 70% of libraries report that cataloguing is now more efficient with the single system also providing more data on resources and borrowing so that money spent on books is done in the best way possible. The project has led to the growth of a collaborative library network that solves problems together and provides mentoring to smaller libraries.

Public engagement: Increased efficiency in collection management has provided library staff with more time on the floor engaging with users.

Legitimacy & support

Clear objectives: One Card aligns with the objectives of the *Libraries Act 1982* to promote a co-operative approach to the provision of library services and ensure the whole community has access to research and information services.

Political support: Cabinet approved the project and ongoing support for the initiative was provided by the Minister for the Arts. One Card supported an MOU signed by the Minister and President of the Local Government Association to provide equitable access to public library collections across council boundaries.

Stakeholder & community support: Commitment from at least 40 councils was needed for the system to be cost effective. Libraries SA worked closely with local councils and library branches to demonstrate its benefits, resulting in all 68 local councils signing up to the initiative.

Operational capability

ICT and other resources: One Card resulted in the purchase and implementation of a single ICT system delivering a high quality library management service for all SA public libraries, including ongoing system maintenance.

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Human resources: Staff from the Libraries Board led the project with individual councils and libraries managing local implementation. New work arrangements were put in place within existing resources to manage the increased volume of items in transit.

Financial: The purchase, project management and operational cost of the system over four years was initially estimated at $8.4M with costs shared between the Libraries Board and local councils. The new system would have been unaffordable for most local libraries but by joining together they were able jointly to purchase a leading edge system. The project was delivered 18 months ahead of schedule and $3.5M cheaper than the initial estimate. The total cost is at least $0.7M per annum less than the cost of libraries continuing to run their own systems.

Outcome

A research study funded by the Local Government Association's research and development scheme was conducted in 2014 to assess the benefits of One Card and whether it had met the objectives in the business plan. The vast majority of objectives were met. Some of the results of the evaluation indicate that:

- items being shared between libraries have increased by more than 40%

- libraries are gaining new users (rural members, studying adults, high school students)

- 79% of libraries have noted cost savings for their local councils

- libraries have reported overwhelmingly positive feedback from users.

One Card also enabled Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure, Libraries SA and APN Outdoor to team up to provide travellers on Adelaide trams with access to e-magazines via the free on-board Wi-Fi service. A selection of e-magazines is available free to all travellers, while library members can access over 400 titles, providing added value to the community, encouraging more people to join public libraries and improving the public transport experience.

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