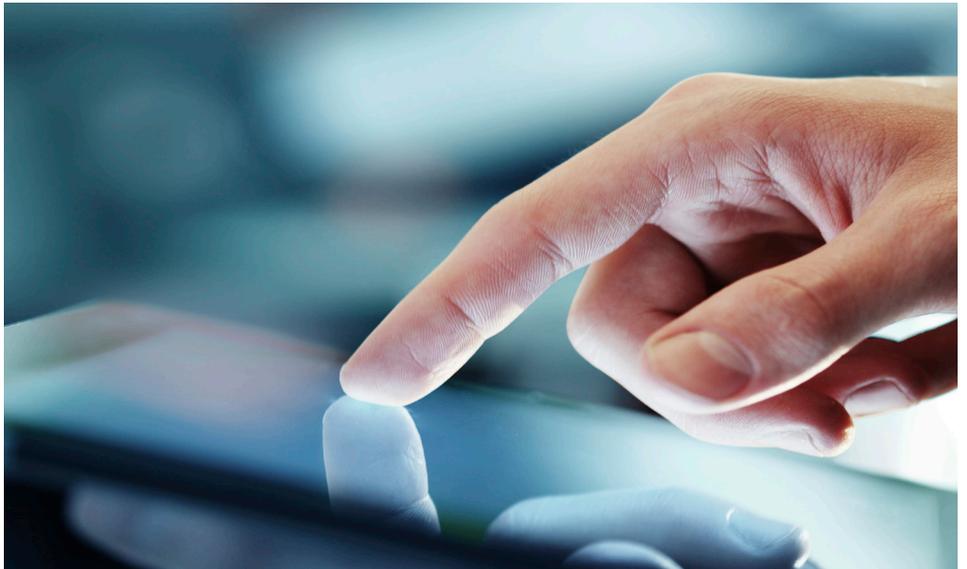


## Case study:

## Bringing knowledge to librarians' fingertips with Soprano

*"Soprano means we can provide a much better, more professional service to our customers"*

Allison Thomas-Smith, home-visit librarian, Lambeth Council



Today's libraries are embracing the latest tablet and cloud technology to put information at librarians' fingertips. Cloud-based web applications, such as Capita's Soprano, mean that the sight of library staff stuck behind a desk using a PC to answer queries from borrowers is set to become a thing of the past.

Soprano gives librarians the freedom to access their library management system (LMS) from anywhere inside or outside the library, via any type of tablet device, enabling services to be delivered when and where they're needed. Here, three different libraries explain how Soprano is helping them improve their customers' experiences.

### Focus on: Aberdeenshire Council

The library service at Aberdeenshire Council is extensive, receiving around a million visits a year to its 35 libraries and four mobile libraries across a huge geographical area. They evaluated the benefits that Soprano could bring them and chose to use it on their mobile library vans before using it in new 'pop-up' libraries.

Gavin Leggat, systems support officer, explains why they began using Soprano just under a year ago: "I sat in on the webinars, and was really excited about what it would let us do. We were using an older mobile product, but Soprano meant our LMS would be updated in real time.

"We really liked the idea of roaming between shelving checking borrower status or being out and about in the mobile library vans, and still being able to access our database immediately on an iPad."

Using Soprano has been a strategic move at Aberdeenshire to counteract the ever-present risk of static or falling library usage. "It's really important to us that we can take our library services

to people rather than the other way around; it means we are proactively addressing the drop in borrowers many libraries are facing.

"With Soprano's capabilities, we've been able to plan innovative initiatives such as a pop-up library at the Visit Scotland centre in Braemar, which gives us brand new premises without expensive rental rates to consider."

Soprano's ease of use means minimal training is required. Gavin continues: "We'll be giving staff from Visit Scotland permissions to issue and discharge books, and I don't anticipate any problems with them using it as it's very intuitive.

"As well as issuing books and making reservations, one of the things we really like is the way Soprano records borrowers' interests and their previous transactions. We get many requests for recommendations and now librarians can instantly see what might appeal.

## Case Study

### Focus on: Aberdeenshire Council continued...

"Having this knowledge helps us provide a better and quicker service, which should further entice readers to use their library."

Going forward, Gavin has more pioneering ideas up his sleeve. "For example, we'd like to use Soprano at our library service at Peterhead Prison where accessing the network can be fraught with difficulties. With a web-based product like this, it's not inconceivable that in the future prisoners will be able to carry out limited functionality for other prisoners as part of their work programme.

"We're looking forward to going to places we've never been before."

### Focus on: University of South Wales

The University of South Wales is deeply committed to providing an excellent student experience and this extends to its library service. Learning resource assistant Hazel Seymour is in no doubt that Soprano has helped improve the quality and speed of its provision.

She comments: "A web-based system works particularly well for us as our library is split into two parts, with the library desk downstairs and the books upstairs. Previously, this meant that when staff were helping students upstairs, they had no access to our LMS. We were constantly running up and down to retrieve the information we needed. "We started using Soprano over a year ago

## Benefits of Soprano:

- Supports the delivering of library services anywhere, both in and outside the traditional library
- Enables library staff to deliver a higher quality, more responsive service
- Improves efficiency as staff have live access to the LMS when offsite. An offline mode is provided for when there is no internet connection
- Easy to use and intuitive interface means minimal training is required
- Allows libraries to counteract static or falling borrower numbers by becoming more innovative and cutting-edge
- Circulation and stock management functionality are catered for on the mobile device
- Can be used on a tablet or a PC, depending on which suits the member of staff.

and have found the freedom with a roving system is invaluable, particularly at the beginning of term when we get endless queries. There are still some questions that need to be answered at our PCs, but overall our service is much slicker and faster.

"We have a number of library staff that contribute to our roving 'Here to Help' service on a rota basis. We've always been highly visible with blue badges, but now we can help on the spot with things like reservations, fines and locating books. Students are always really impressed; they like the fact we're using cutting-edge technology and iPads to answer their questions, and they appreciate the immediacy of our answers."

### Focus on: Lambeth Council

Allison Thomas-Smith and Sarah Kennedy have both worked as home-visit librarians at Lambeth Council for almost 25 years each. As soon as they heard about Soprano, they knew it would offer a myriad of benefits to their customers and staff.

Allison explains: "Everything about Soprano sounded like it would be conducive to the way we work. We have three vans visiting elderly people, residential homes and community centres all over Lambeth, and each van makes up to 40 visits a week. "Soprano means we can provide a much better, more professional service to our

customers. We sign in once, like email, and have virtually instant access to borrowers' records. We can issue and discharge books very quickly, and reservations are flagged up on the spot. We can also see the type of books people have read before, and pack our vans accordingly.

"When we're at someone's house, we can easily see how many books they have previously borrowed. If they are returning seven, but it should be eight, we can immediately prompt them. Borrowers often say 'Oh yes, I'd forgotten about that. It's upstairs, I'll go and get it.'"

Sarah adds: "There's no doubt that it makes us more efficient. Everything used to take twice as long – we would write everything down with a pen and paper while we were on location, then come back to the office and wait for a PC to be free to type it all up. Now we can do everything while we're out, so we come back and just shelve the books. Managing stock has become much easier."

Both agree that minimal training is needed to use Soprano. Allison says: "Even the staunchest technophobe has found it easy to use."

Like to find out more?

To discover more about Soprano please contact your Capita account manager or:

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