

CAPITA

Case Study:

The Hive

Key benefits:

- Allows users to access a single database of resources
- Different borrowing rules automatically applied based on user profiles
- Ability to use shared PCs within the Hive with different service options depending on whether it is academic or public use
- Books can be ordered online and returned to any council or university library
- Self service issuing and returning of resources via kiosks and the Hive sorter.



The Hive is a state-of-the-art library, which is both a public library and a university library in one. Jointly run by Worcestershire County Council and the University of Worcester, it provides students and members of the public with access to a quarter of a million books and twelve miles of archive collections. Capita's Library Management System supports the entire operation helping everything to run like clockwork.

“The software has helped us deliver a shared library that manages to meet the needs of both sets of users and both organisations.”

Kathy Kirk, Strategic Libraries and Learning Manager,
Worcestershire County Council.

Back in 2004, both the University of Worcester and Worcestershire County Council independently reached the conclusion that their library buildings and services would not support their future plans for development.

“Our old library building constrained the ambitions for our service. At the same time, the university was expanding quickly and needed facilities to support this growth. We decided to come together to meet our joint goals,” explains Kathy Kirk, strategic libraries and learning manager for Worcestershire libraries and learning Service.

The aim was to have a shared library service for over half a million citizens and over 9,000 students, to open up access to the extensive collections of both the university and public libraries.

Inspired integration

Paul Williams, the academic services team leader for the University of Worcester, explains that the scale of the project was ambitious, “We wanted to bring together so much material under one roof, over five floors, with 800 study places and only one integrated catalogue.

“To deliver on the aims of the project, we recognised that our choice of software would be crucial. We needed a system that could offer full integration whilst ensuring that differences between the two sets of users could exist side by side,” comments Paul.

Complex services

To add to the complexities, the Hive was not to be an isolated library but would be part of the wider public library service network of 21 libraries across Worcestershire and accompany the University's existing study facilities. Library staff and users would need access to resources in other libraries in the area and be able to return books to and from other libraries.

"From a technical point of view, what we required was not the norm so we could not simply buy an off-the-shelf product," explains Paul. After studying the market and the options available the Hive chose Capita's Library Management System (LMS).

"Capita had the right products and also understood and bought into the shared service vision," comments Stephen Mobley, who is the quality and standards manager for Worcestershire libraries and learning.

Transition

The implementation was complex because both organisations had to run and provide library services right up until the moment of the opening of the Hive building.

The old system shut down on Thursday and the new one was fully functional by the following Monday, with no break in service, as Paul explains.

"Capita ensured that users didn't experience any down time when switching from the old to the new system by maintaining a functioning service during the three day switch period."

Joining resources

The opening of the Hive was a milestone in shared library services and Capita's LMS has allowed the two catalogues to be searched as a single integrated database.

While the collections of both organisations have been combined from the public's point of view, the ownership of books is still accounted for behind the scenes.

"Our users tell us that they really value the new range and depth of the materials that having the joint stock has enabled us to provide," comments Kathy.

Differences accommodated

When a user logs on to any of the shared PCs, the LMS recognises whether they are a student or a member of the public. This determines the view of the catalogue that is displayed to them. Likewise, students get access to more applications when they log on to any of the shared PCs on site.

"Although all material is available to all customers, there is recognition built in to the software that certain texts are of key importance to students," says Paul. For example, these differences allow students to loan out restricted texts for 24 hours, whereas members of the public must use them on site.

Equally, with core university texts, the public can only borrow them one at a time while students can borrow up to 12 for two weeks. "It is important that the LMS accommodates such nuanced distinctions and ensures students can access the information they need, when they need it."

Streamlined services

"The information the system gives us also allows us to identify any stock gaps in the joint collections so we can fill them. Our acquisitions are now more targeted, cost efficient and effective," explains Kathy.

"We are also making it easier to access resources," says Paul. Students and the public can use whichever library they choose in the Worcestershire authority to collect and return books.

"Some students may live 20 miles from the Hive in the centre of Worcester. If they can simply go to their local library to return books it is a huge benefit to them. Our new LMS and RFID connector from Capita identifies where the book belongs – whether that is the Hive, one of the university's other facilities or one of the council's 20 local libraries. The library courier system takes care of the rest," says Paul.

Pooling staff

The new joint LMS is helping staff provide better services too. Users can now phone in to the local authority's call centre for information and as the data is on one system, the call centre can also be used to chase overdue books from the public. This is possible as Capita have integrated the LMS with the council's telephony provider.

"We have been able to pool staffing resources so that our services and staff are now available seven days a week until 10pm," says Kathy.

"The library provision is now one of the best in the country. Capita's Library Management System has been a core part of us being able to deliver this innovative and complex project," comments Kathy.



For further information, visit
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