

# SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC LIBRARIES MOVING TOWARDS A STATE-WIDE CONSORTIUM

- ✓ Use your library card at any library in the State?
- ✓ Borrow a book while on holidays at the beach, and return it to your local library?
- ✓ Reserve any of the State's 4.6M items and have them delivered to your local library at no cost to you?

This wishlist is becoming a reality in South Australia as the state's public libraries join together as a consortium to provide benefits for all library users.

The Libraries Board of South Australia, working with the state's Local Government Association, has sponsored a project which will see all 134 libraries in the State connected to a shared library Management System over a three-year period. After a launch in May 2012, 46 libraries are now sharing the One Card system (as it is branded) with a further 54 libraries scheduled to join during 2013.

The consortium ensures considerable local autonomy with local rules and branding and, where required, consistency in some policies.

This collaboration has been two years in the making and has involved over 100 public library staff from many councils in the process. While the process was coordinated by the Libraries Board, public library staff drew up the technical specification for the system that they wanted, and then over 80 staff participated in the scoring of the shortlisted vendors' products – ensuring that whichever system was chosen would best meet the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century public libraries. This selection process included a week-long, hands-on interrogation of the preferred system by 80 public library staff as well as reference visits interstate and overseas to ensure that what was being offered did meet our needs. While no system is perfect, libraries were very clear in their preference for the SirsiDynix suite of products which were chosen.

All libraries, regardless of their size will have access to all products purchased, which include a web-based discovery layer (which can harvest and display records from multiple sources such as

online databases and other econtent) as well as a digital asset management product, quality reporting software, and mobile applications for customers.

For some of our smaller, remote libraries this project provides them with their first web presence, which provides services for their customers they've never had before. These include a 24/7 online catalogue for self-placed reservations, access to online database information, SMS notification of reservations, and overdue notices to name a few.

Our larger libraries are migrating from systems which, while operational, were

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not at the forefront of development. Also, their customers have demonstrated a real appetite for the diversity which is found in the collections of other libraries, with the flow of reserved material being substantial to both large and small libraries alike. And customers are reporting real satisfaction with the speed at which their reservations are being filled.

All libraries are experiencing the financial benefits of collaboration – being able to both purchase and fund the operating cost of a comprehensive system at significantly lower costs than it would cost them to achieve alone. This benefit makes this project a success in the eyes of finance directors. And there are considerable additional savings that are less tangible but still very valuable – sharing one database means one person fixing a catalogue record or an authority file provides a benefit to all others who use the system. Staff can move from library to library – already familiar with the LMS that they will be working on in their new job. When someone finds the best way of doing something on the system it is shared with all – leading to

ongoing efficiency in 134 worksites. And the list goes on.

The consortium will continue to be supported with the Libraries Board staff providing ongoing project coordination and first level support for daily operations. Also, library managers will soon vote for representatives to be part of a user group which will provide governance oversight of the consortium and make recommendations about ongoing changes to operations.

This project has caught the imagination of politicians and the public alike, with many customers asking

impatiently when their council will be joining, and politicians eager to promote the success of councils collaborating both together and with the state government – and doing so in ways that save money and improve services. We're looking forward to a busy and exciting 2013 as the network expands to more eager customers.

Two examples of the locally branded discovery layer can

be seen here:

<http://sapln.ent.sirsidynix.net.au/client/marion>

<http://sapln.ent.sirsidynix.net.au/client/adelaide/>

There is also a public blog about the project where we share progress and learnings. It can be seen here: <http://libraryssa.blogspot.com.au>. And promotional/explanatory movies are available here: <http://www.libraries.sa.gov.au>

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