

Case Study: The Vale of Glamorgan



About the service

All of the 11 libraries in the Vale of Glamorgan, including the mobile libraries, process requests from the public to locate a particular book or article that is not held in stock.

The branch or mobile library forward the request to the central requests unit and the team manage all aspects of the request process centrally. The team check the bibliographic details using the BookData service, and then a decision is made whether to purchase or borrow the item.

If the item is out of print, or too expensive to justify purchase, then the request team use the UnityUK service to locate and request the item from another local authority library or from the British Library.

UnityUK in action

The Requests Unit use the UnityUK service to identify potential supply libraries for the item that has been requested. Prior to using UnityUK, this process involved searching a number of different services and databases which was time consuming and awkward. UnityUK has streamlined the process of locating items as it provides a one-stop shop that searches UnityUK libraries, LinkUK libraries, COPAC and The British Library in one go.

The service also delivers the added benefit of providing links to live holdings information that tells the team at Glamorgan whether an item is actually available. This information helps the requests team to decide on the most appropriate rota for each request, as they give

TCR Region: Wales
Type of Organisation: Local Authority
Population Served: 122,000
Libraries: 11
UnityUK Licences: 1
UnityUK Services: Standard Package
Requests Made P.A.: 191
Requests Supplied P.A.: 181
UnityUK Member since: June 2006

priority to locations that have the item available on the shelf. Prior to using UnityUK, the only way to find out whether an item was actually available at the potential supply library, was to telephone or fax each library.

Helen McNabb, Bibliographic Services Officer at the Vale of Glamorgan continues, **“After only six months of operation we can already see that UnityUK has speeded up our requests process. Having all possible locations, complete with live data from the supply library catalogue, together in one place is a real time saver.”**

UnityUK automatically generates and manages the supply library rota for each request. The requests team find that the UnityUK rota system is much quicker and more reliable than the email, post or fax methods of placing requests, that they used previously. The service also automatically provides updates on the progress of each request so the team can immediately see where any given request is up to and, if necessary, feed that information back to the branch library.

When an item is received, the requests team attach a standard barcode to the item. They use the library management system to issue the book to the requester and to chase the item when it is due for return. To help the branch libraries, colour coded barcode labels are used to indicate whether the item can be renewed or not.



Why Use UnityUK?

The Vale of Glamorgan selected the UnityUK service for two key reasons: first, it was backed by TCR, and second, because it was no more expensive than their previous system. When they started the service in June 2006, the Vale of Glamorgan team were already aware of the technology that powers UnityUK through their participation in the Bridgend and Vale Libraries in the Community (BAVALINC) resource sharing project. (<http://www.bavalinc.org.uk/>). BAVALINC is powered by OCLC PICA's VDX resource sharing solution, which is one of the components behind the UnityUK service.

Helen explains, "We had been using our previous system for a number of years but it had not developed much during that time. We knew that UnityUK was built on proven technology and offered some new features and functions over our previous system. We felt certain that the service would continue to develop and bring new features online. Since we went live we have already seen several system updates and we know that more new features are planned for 2007."

As is often the case when implementing sophisticated software, the switch to UnityUK has led to a steep learning curve for the team. It has taken some time to become comfortable with all the new features and the new ways of working that the service offers.

The OCLC PICA helpdesk team has supported the Vale of Glamorgan throughout their early months with the system, and will continue to provide help and advice in the future. The helpdesk team offer telephone, email and online support for all service users. They provide 'walk-through' guidance on how the system works and can pass on hints and tips on how to get the best out of the service.



Summary

The team no longer have to hunt down the items they need to request as they have a wider range of search targets available in one place. It is now easy to carry out an exhaustive survey of what is available using a single search, and check on the availability of individual items at the same time. These two features have reduced the time it takes to process requests and ultimately reduced the time that customers have to wait for their requests to be fulfilled.

The team in Glamorgan are keen to see more and more libraries get their live catalogues linked into UnityUK as they see this as one of the key benefits to using the service.

Helen summarises their experiences of using the service, **"For us, UnityUK has taken a lot of the donkey work out of the requesting process. We no longer have to fill in forms, send faxes and generate chasers; the system does it all for us. This has saved a great deal of time and effort even when, like us, you're only doing a couple of hundred requests a year."**

