



CIVICA

Three libraries sign for new Spydus 8

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Libraries in Queensland and NSW are among the first to commit to using an enhanced version of the Spydus library management software, from Civica, which incorporates the Microsoft SQL Server database.

Townsville Library in Far North Queensland was the first to sign for the new system, although northern Sydney's Ku-ring-gai Library will be the first to implement the technology. Thuringowa Library will implement the existing version of Spydus before upgrading to the SQL Server version in six months' time.

The new version of Spydus is the first fully integrated library management system to be completely designed around web technology and modern relational databases.

Townsville Library

Seeking a more powerful system to cater for increasing capacity and replace its BookPlus system, Townsville Library called tenders and selected Spydus after a searching evaluation process.

"Spydus had most to offer technically, and our selection was also based on price as well as Civica's proven capabilities in training and implementation," said Library Manager Annette Pike.

She is confident the new technology will enable the Library, which serves the capital of Far North Queensland, to continue its expansion seamlessly. Already more than 48,000 borrowers use library facilities in central Townsville and outlying Aitkenvale, as well as two mobile libraries and extensive home delivery services.

According to Annette, the organisation is moving towards becoming a more interpretive type of library, with reference collections that give more focus on social history. Library members will be able to access these from home or office, via the Web.

Ku-ring-gai Library

The strong online capabilities of Civica's new version of Spydus were a key attraction when Ku-ring-gai Library chose technology to replace its long-standing BookPlus system.

According to Library Manager Jennifer Borrell, borrowers are technology-savvy and have high expectations of the library's systems. Some complain about the existing technology and suggest ways of improving it. With 64 per cent of residents using a computer at home – the third highest percentage in Australia – many customers make their reservations and renewals via the Internet.

"Perhaps the most important factor in our choice of new software was the online catalogue," says Jennifer. "Our existing catalogue is far from satisfactory, so we looked particularly closely at vendors' products and believe that the Spydus catalogue is the best. In particular, we like its ease of use."

However, the choice of new technology encompassed a careful evaluation of four systems from vendors that responded to the Library's tender. These were checked against specifications and Library staff attended demonstrations and visited other libraries using the various solutions on offer.



Annette Pike Library Manager, Townsville Library and Sarah Gauci Implementation and Support Manager Civica.

SPYDUS

Library Solutions

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“Essentially library management systems tend to have similar core functions, though some have more bells and whistles. I was looking to make sure we lost no functionality by moving from our old software, and any new functions would be a bonus.

“We liked other aspects of Spydus too. We will be using all the modules, including Acquisitions.”

A municipality with 109,000 people, Ku-ring-gai has four libraries, a central library plus three large branches used by 60 per cent of all borrowers.

Jennifer Borrell expects Ku-ring-gai Library to go live with the SQL server version of Spydus in April 2004.

Thuringowa Library

Day-to-day usability of the Spydus solution was the clincher when Thuringowa Library made its final decision on choosing new technology. A truly innovative library, rated among Queensland’s top five for service delivery in a recent survey, Thuringowa is recognised as a leader in the use of information technology.

According to Geoffrey Burnett, Manager Information Services, vendors’ responses were pared down to two after careful evaluation in the quest for a new system. Then library staff talked to their counterparts at other libraries, both new and long-standing users of Spydus and its rival product.

“The librarians’ comments swung our decision in Civica’s favour as they were far more favourable towards Spydus than the alternative solution,” said Geoffrey. “We felt that the functionality and usability of a system from a librarian’s point of view, sitting at the Circulation desk and doing day-to-day work that our patrons could see, was critically important. That quality of usability helped us to finalise our decision.”

Management decided to evaluate alternative software offerings when it was obliged to replace its outmoded hardware. Implementation of the new SQL Server version of Spydus fits in with Council’s strategy of keeping the number of relational databases to a minimum, since it uses SQL technology for a number of other applications.

Compared to the old system, Spydus will offer patrons far more flexibility and usability because it is Web-based, according to Geoffrey Burnett. Its strong Internet capabilities mean that customers will see exactly the same screens at home as they use on terminals in the library. Also the screens will feature Thuringowa Library branding rather than that of some other product or place.

“From a management perspective, it’s a lot more modern system and will allow us to produce far more meaningful statistics,” said Geoffrey. “Moreover, it gives us more interfaces to external databases.”

Implementation began in early October with the purchase of hardware, and the beginning of training, which will continue until Christmas. The project team will be setting up parameters and workflows associated with Spydus, then hands-on training will resume before the go-live date in March 2004.

In line with its pledge to deliver services that enliven the imagination and broaden horizons, Thuringowa Library’s strategy for the future sees a progressive development into a virtual library. Web access will play a key role, and the library recently updated its web site, simplifying navigation and making all information and services available from the home page.

A number of additional databases will give virtual borrowers access to a range of journals, articles and other information. Thuringowa is one of only two Queensland participants in the Australian Public Libraries Portal, to be called Information Australia, which will give users access to APAIFT full text information. Additionally, Thuringowa was the first regional library to join Picture Australia, making local images available on the Web.

Ron Store, Manager Library Services, a post he holds jointly with Susan Coker, attributes Thuringowa Library’s continuing innovation to support from Thuringowa City Council’s CEO, Lynn Russell, a Qantas Manager of the Year.

Lynn says: “Without doubt, we have one of the most innovative public libraries in Queensland, if not in Australia, which is remarkable for a municipality of 54,000 residents. We will continue to use cutting edge technology, such as Spydus, to pursue our vision of evolving into a virtual library.”