The bigger you are and the more necessary your service is, the harder it sometimes is to change it.

Leeds City Council is pretty significant in terms of size – it has 36 static libraries, eight mobile libraries, one school library service and almost 90,000 active borrowers. Its library management system helps users discover hundreds of thousands of books, ebooks and other items, and helps its libraries stock and issue them more than three million times a year.

As the hardware supporting the whole LMS was aging, the library service was faced with a choice. Sandra Sharp, electronic services manager at the Library and Information Service, explains: “Our server was reaching ‘end of life’ so we knew we needed to either replace it or look at other options. I was keen to find out more about a hosted cloud solution that could potentially lower costs and reduce the management time, but it was important that we did not risk service levels to customers.”

The council had an existing relationship with Capita and felt Chorus would offer a service they could rely on as well as the benefits they were looking for.

“Moving to a cloud-based system was the sensible choice,” says John Daniel, the senior technical advisor at the Library and Information Service. “After all, this is the direction the world is heading. I also felt there were advantages to be gained from having our LMS hosted by those who had designed and built it. Who could understand it better, or provide better support?”

Having made the decision to move to a hosted solution, the migration to Chorus went very smoothly. “Capita assigned someone to walk us through the implementation, and they were able to pull in the appropriate people for different parts of the project,” says John.

Moving to a hosted solution requires planning and, like many organisations, there was a complex network set up within Leeds City Council. Integration with the self-service machines and other council corporate systems such as the finance system was needed, so any issues that came up were worked through, with the Leeds and Capita teams collaborating closely on solutions.

“Capita doesn’t leave you to sort things out by yourself,” says John. “When our existing network processes needed to be joined to the new system, such as when a borrower gives us their
postcode and we find their address, Capita was happy to liaise with Corporate IT to get this right.”

The customer experience

One of the most significant results of the switch was probably that borrowers were not aware that anything had changed. “Our customers didn’t notice any difference, which was what we wanted,” says Sandra.

The differences behind the scenes were more significant, however. Using Chorus means Leeds City Council no longer has any hardware on site to look after. There are no servers for Corporate IT to monitor and Capita deals with any data protection concerns. It also means Leeds City Council doesn’t need to worry about coping with increasing demand or the system becoming slow at peak times as it is Capita’s responsibility to ensure there is always the capacity to meet needs.

Key benefits at Leeds City Council

• System runs more quickly
• Improved security
• Capacity to meet peak demands
• Performance reports completed faster
• Energy and time savings anticipated
• Significantly reduced overhead for Corporate IT
• No interruption to customer service

speed and simplicity

“The LMS is now much quicker than it was before. The team that works on our performance indicators say they are able to run their reports faster too, so it’s saving us time in a number of places,” explains John.

In addition, there are other advantages; “Security is tighter than ever and we have simplified the network, which helps integrate with the third-party systems we use. It also reduces the potential number of points of failure. If anything happened, we would have fewer places to look as well as a single point of contact at Capita.”

In fact, significant time is being saved as IT staff no longer have to check everything is running smoothly each day, back up the server or perform security patches upgrades to the operating system as this is now Capita’s responsibility. The council is also expecting to note savings in energy costs through not having the servers located on site.

“Overall, I feel confident that we have a fully future-proofed system,” says Sandra. “And I’m glad that in another five years, we won’t have to buy new servers!”

Key features of Capita’s Chorus hosted solution:

• No need for hardware onsite
• No maintenance, replacement or upgrading operating system costs
• Fully scalable
• Frees staff from routine maintenance and administration
• Available 24/7
• Reduces the overall cost of ownership.

To find out more about Capita’s library management solutions, please speak to a Capita account manager or contact us:

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