

# **New Zealand Post Management Excellence**

## **Awards**

**Smarter Systems : Better Libraries : Greater Auckland – the Smarter Systems Project.**

**Submitted as an entry for The New Zealand Post Technology Innovation Award**

Presented on behalf of the Councils of Waitakere City, Rodney District, North Shore City, Manukau City and Auckland City

In 2001-2002 the Libraries of Auckland, Manukau, North Shore, Rodney and Waitakere local authorities formed a working entity known as eLGAR (Libraries for a Greater Auckland Region) to facilitate co-operation and joint activities. The major project they developed is the subject of this entry.

**1. The need for and expected benefits of the project and how it furthers the council's vision and strategic direction. (15 points)**

Each of the Councils' goals include improved customer services; more effective use of resources; and more efficient processes. eLGAR's biggest initiative has been the joint selection, purchase, implementation and operation of a shared library management system. Called the Smarter Systems Project, it reflects eLGAR's vision of *Smarter Systems : Better Libraries : Greater Auckland*.

The project was a priority as all the libraries had software close to the end of its functional life. Benefits expected and achieved include:

- Responsiveness to customer requests for greater functionality, improved ease of use, access to more information, and self-service options. Many customers also used more than one library system and found the existing diversity confusing.
- Delivering funders greater efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources.
- Providing library staff with a more intuitive GUI and windows-based system which interfaced more easily with external systems; providing greater functionality and streamlined workflows; providing an easier customer-training environment.
- Sharing expertise between libraries to achieve a common standard of excellence.
- Developing a shared system support structure to increase the support available to all libraries and to reduce the impact of individual staff absences.
- Containing costs by doing something once instead of doing it five times.

**2. Effective project management techniques (15 points)**

An commitment was made to best practice using resources such as *Governance and control of large information technology projects, Office of the Controller and Auditor General, 2000*. The Library Managers created "The eLGAR Way" outlining the principles of collaboration and the preferred way of working together and with any partners; this was included in all subsequent project and contract documentation. They also drafted a Memorandum of Understanding which was signed by all CEOs.

The project's governance body was the Project Board, comprising the Library Managers and the IT Projects Manager from one local authority; the Board reported at milestone points to the Regional CEO Forum. Once the Board had accepted a hosting bid from CITAG<sup>1</sup> the Board was restructured: the IT Projects Manager was replaced by 2 CITAG representatives. Fortnightly Board meetings were held to oversee the project and

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<sup>1</sup> CITAG is the Communications and Technology Advisory Group comprising the Councils' IT Managers

project archives were established. Phillips Fox were contracted to provide legal advice and the Specialist Assurance Group of Audit New Zealand provided quality assurance and real time risk management advice.

Each phase had a detailed project plan and Project or Programme Manager. Project and Programme Managers were sourced through accepted commercial RFP processes. Following RFI, RFP and vendor demonstration phases, the product was chosen unanimously by all the libraries and the IT departments. Senior Council managers attended a strategic session with each vendor and they too supported the decision. The hosting provider was chosen through a process agreed with Audit New Zealand.

At the beginning of the implementation phase a project charter was agreed – it outlined objectives, benefits, budget, timeline, scope, measures, change and communications management, project organisation, risks, issues, roles and document management. A detailed project plan was developed, tasks detailed, resources identified, sourced and assigned. Work began on analysis and design of process, data conversion plans, testing regimes, technical requirement planning, training planning, change and communication and forward planning for post go-live support. Following implementation a review was held and learnings documented and shared.

### **3. A participatory approach to communicating with and getting “buy-in” from stakeholders associated with the project. (15 points)**

Multiple communication strands included: staff, senior council management, politicians, the CEO Forum, the Shared Services Regional Group, IT departments, customers, potential partners and other libraries. The same principles were applied to each group: the right information at the right time, complemented by rapid responses to requests for information and to questions.

The Board gave four milestone reports to the CEO Forum. Meetings with the project sponsor (Colin Dale, then Manukau City CEO) were held before each report to the Forum for guidance on issues and proposed solutions. All reports outlined achievements and upcoming activities; where decisions were needed the report canvassed options and recommended solutions. All recommendations were accepted.

Library Managers also kept their local management and politicians informed. One special meeting was held for Council managers to provide a detailed briefing on progress to date and future plans. A presentation to the mayoral Forum was made at the successful go-live. Two meetings of the Shared Services Regional Group were attended.

Initial communications with IT departments were through local channels; as the project got closer to choosing a hosting provider a formal briefing was held and then there were regular meetings culminating in (after testing the external market) a decision to use CITAG as the host. From then, the members of CITAG on the Board were the formal communication channel with the other IT managers. Informal local communication continued.

Potential partners were the other two local authorities in the region: Franklin and Papakura. Meetings and email and phone contact was maintained. Papakura has included funding for joining eLGAR in this year's budget. Franklin indicated they too are likely to join – indicating that communication has been successful.

Staff were a major communication audience. There were regular project-wide newsletters, there was a project email address which could be used for questions and comment, all libraries had significant numbers of staff involved in the project and they had communication responsibilities in their specialist areas. Each Board meeting included decisions on follow-up communication and there were road-shows across the region to inform staff about benefits, progress and timelines. Each road-show was evaluated and staff reported high levels of satisfaction. Targeted training was delivered to approximately 1400 staff before go-live.

Customer communication was concentrated in the month before go-live. It included handouts about changes, posters, and information about the new system on each public access catalogue. Press releases were issued to local papers and there were articles in Councils' external newsletters. Staff were stationed by each public access catalogue at go-live to assist customers.

Information sharing with other libraries was through meetings, email contact, articles in professional journals, conference presentations, and local meetings. Board members also visited three regions and addressed meetings of library and IT staff at their request. Two of these regions are now following variations of the model.

#### **4. Innovation and Originality in Technology Innovation (25 points)**

This is the largest, most innovative and collaborative project undertaken by local government. It provides a single shared library management system for the five libraries and their customers using Millennium software from Innovative Interfaces Inc., of San Francisco. One million customers have access to the 2 million record catalogue of the five libraries (the largest database of its type in Australasia) at the libraries and via the Internet in English or Te Reo, and library staff have improved management of core library processes. This functionality is delivered from one shared database, utilising a single hosting and network solution with a centralised support structure. The scale, complexity and levels of co-operation required for the project make this a first for local government and for public libraries in New Zealand.

A regional system support team has been created to maintain the system, providing all libraries with a stronger support structure with a wider pool of staff to draw upon. The team is located at a central site and maintains links to all libraries and IT departments.

The regional hosting solution was developed by the five IT departments in response to a full RFP issued to them by the Board. All IT departments designed the hosting solution which has Auckland City providing the immediate hosting services (a relationship managed by a Service Level Agreement) and other IT departments providing local support. The project was the catalyst for the establishment of CITAG which now meets to consider further collaborative opportunities – another innovation. The software

developed during the project to facilitate data merging is unique and a potential product.

As a first for local government in the region and for public libraries in New Zealand, there were no established models to follow. The processes necessary for planning, communication, project management, resource sharing and decision-making across five organisations were developed from scratch. One bibliographic database and one customer database meant the system design had to be all agreed by all parties and common business rules agreed wherever possible. Procurement and maintenance contracts have been signed by all parties, rather than using a lead agency model. This follows The eLGAR Way and its emphasis on building strong relationships between equals. Equipment is jointly owned and the finance departments developed common depreciation standards.

Customers have much greater flexibility and control over their library service experience. They can: view, update and change contact information; select a preferred communication method with their library (via email, telephone or printed notice); register for library membership online and begin using services before even visiting the physical library. The libraries can now respond to customer demand by enabling them to opt-in to recording the items they borrow from the library, store frequently used or preferred searches and repeat them as desired, and search (for free) any of the 168 subscription databases. Services such as floating collections (where materials become available for borrowing at whichever site they are returned to) enhance the customer experience and keep collections refreshed.

Facilities available from home or work for customers include: joining the library online; viewing items they have checked out; renewing one, many or all items checked out to them; requesting items; and viewing charges and fines. Services are available 24 by 7, 365 days a year.

When searching the catalogue customers have visibility of all items held in the five library systems, or can limit their searches to a specific library, library system or to children's material only. Library staff can see all holdings which assists purchasing decisions and means catalogue records are created or purchased once only.

Online suggestions for purchase are a new feature and customers use this service more than 1000 times per month – a huge increase over the previous manual system. E-services are supported in terms of customer transactions, and also business-to-business procurement transactions, including ordering, receipt and payment.

The project was only the second local government user of the e-Government workspace. This resource was used to assist internal communications, and document management.

## **5. Successful result, both in financial and non-financial terms. (15 points)**

The project was delivered on time and under budget, with minimal disruption at go-live. System support costs for the five libraries have been contained, and in particular those

libraries which previously outsourced their system support are reporting much reduced support costs.

Regional training has been developed to ensure consistency of training frameworks and customer communications can be developed once and the costs shared by the libraries. Staff have developed good relationships and share expertise and collaborate on developments. The shared System Support Team means greater sharing of expertise and less reliance on individuals.

By working together more advanced software and a wider range of modules has been obtained and implemented than any library could have purchased working alone, and future costs of additional functionality will also be reduced. Significantly improved functionality for both customers and staff has been delivered and staff and customers have reported highly satisfactory levels of satisfaction with the software.

The Millennium software provides significant improvements in ease of access to electronic services via the public access catalogues, and there are huge increases in self-service and customer-driven customisation options. All libraries now have a Te Reo version of the catalogue rather than the one library previously.

## **6. That the project as a “good, sensible and right thing to do” (15 points)**

The project is considered the leading model in the region of a successful shared services project. It has been included as a case study in the document *Local authorities working together, Office of the Controller and Auditor General, 2004*.

Staff are very happy with the increased functionality, and the ease of teaching customers how to use the software. Customers are also clearly pleased with the enhanced services and wider range of options. The system has proved very reliable since go-live with 100% application up-time in the subsequent 13 months.

Migration to a new, combined system has provided immediate benefits, and has created the platform for future efficiencies and collaboration. eLGAR's future contains a number of activities (such as the investigation of a shared regional bibliographic team – handling ordering, cataloguing and processing; joint procurement of technical equipment; the possible shared implementation of RFID technology) that would not be possible without this first step.

In addition consortium members are now in an excellent position to make a quantum leap in service offerings. This is especially so in the media management area, e.g., , images, sounds, movies, animation, documents, HTML files and URLs can be linked to catalogue records which the public can access through the public access catalogues.

## **7. Conclusion**

Have a look! The eLGAR website is [www.elgar.govt.nz](http://www.elgar.govt.nz) and from the home page you can explore the catalogue of each of the libraries, selecting a variety of search strategies, and you could even register to be a member.