

Chapter 11

Embracing Change: How South Ayrshire Council Library Service Became a World Leader in Electronic Resources Management

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ABSTRACT

This chapter outlines the successful management style that has proactively facilitated innovative changes to a range of library services. The changes discussed are those facing all contemporary libraries. Starting with an overview of service provision, staffing, the management team, and management style, it considers the factors required for the effective implementation of innovation in a range of services. The topics covered include creating a library “blog,” the benefits of a library bookshop, e-book lending, e-book publishing, creating a library mobile app, and e-magazine lending. The aim of this chapter is to argue that fellow librarians can embrace change and facilitate innovation in ways that are efficient, cost-effective, and cutting-edge, whilst reinforcing the importance of libraries at the centre of our society.

BACKGROUND

South Ayrshire, a community in South West Scotland, has a population of 112,097 (UK 2001 census). It is one of thirty-two Scottish Local Authorities.

The area includes the towns of- Ayr, Prestwick, Troon, Maybole and Girvan. This largely rural area of 422 square miles (1,222 square km) extends from Troon and Symington in the North,

to Ballantrae and Loch Ryan in the South. From Burns Cottage to Culzean Castle, South Ayrshire has a rich history and culture. Scotland’s National Bard, Robert Burns, was born in Alloway, on the outskirts of Ayr, in 1759. Burns cottage is the centrepiece of the Burns National Heritage Park that includes the Burns Monument, Brig O’Doon and Alloway Kirk, where Tam O’Shanter spied on witches and warlocks in the world-famous poem. South Ayrshire is also noted for its fine

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golf courses, including the world-class Turnberry Ailsa course and Royal Troon—both of which have hosted the British Open on a number of occasions.

South Ayrshire Council (SAC) was established in 1996, when Scotland moved from the administrative model of district and regional administrative units, to a unitary authority structure.

The population of South Ayrshire is served by fourteen branch libraries and one mobile library. The largest branch is the Carnegie Library, which has thirty staff and is home to the Local History Library and a large “Cybercentre”. There are six medium-sized “branch” libraries operating with more than one member of staff and six single-manned libraries which have part-time public access.

THE SERVICE

In most respects South Ayrshire’s library service is similar to other Local Authority-run library services: we face the same challenges to deliver an attractive service within severe budget constraints. Staffing numbers and book-fund resources have both been reduced significantly in the recent past and these factors have forced a major rethink about how we can work “smarter” and optimise our use of resources.

There is a Management Team of seven staff- a Senior Library Manager and six specialist librarians. Each professional member of staff has a different area of expertise and carries out a diverse range of duties. The post descriptions are: Carnegie Librarian, Local Studies Librarian, Life-Long Learning Librarian, Acquisitions Librarian and Children’s Services Librarian.

Although these are traditional job titles, the reality of the work carried out currently by post-holders bears little resemblance to that of similar “roles” in the past. Each post has a discreet objective, but, in fact, the area of overlap required

to meet overall objectives has been increasing exponentially. More than ever before, a librarian has to be a “master-of-all-trades” to deliver a specialist service.

The Library Service has always embraced innovation and change- with the aim of delivering the highest quality service. The Senior library staff are committed to shaping future developments. Effective leadership of a productive professional library team propels the Service forward. We are acutely aware that the future of our Service lies in our hands and that we must be radical in our approach, if we are to survive.

The use of social media, and other on-line resources, by professional staff, is mandatory. Staff awareness of current trends in all aspects of librarianship and information dissemination is expected. These resources also provide an invaluable source of staff development. The team of South Ayrshire Libraries is encouraged to take an entrepreneurial and enterprising approach to service delivery.

Staff meetings are a valuable management tool. Effective meetings are vital, if innovation is to take place effectively. Professional staff meetings are held every three weeks. Time is reserved for brainstorming, discussing current developments, articles read on LinkedIn or Twitter, and prioritising future developments. This meeting provides a forum for professional staff to gain insights into what colleagues are doing, rather than merely noting items “for information”. The staff are encouraged to “pitch-in” ideas that would enhance the Service or project. Staff morale within the team is high and what might otherwise be seen as a chore is turned into *fun*.

As previously stated, meetings are held every three weeks. Furthermore, monthly meetings are held with the staff in charge of branch libraries. In addition, the Carnegie Librarian holds a weekly staff meeting for our largest staff group. Like librarians the world over, we talk a lot! This model has

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