



WHELF Shared LMS Benefits Case Study: Cardiff University and NHS Wales

This case study is one of three completed by the Wales Higher Education Libraries Forum (WHELF) as a complementary qualitative study to the Jisc sponsored benefits report produced by Cambridge Econometrics.

Summary

This case study, for Cardiff University and the NHS in Wales, has identified several benefits from the WHELF LMS project.

Benefits identified derive from adopting a new system but also from working across a range of institutions as part of the WHELF consortium.

The key benefits identified by the University include:

- Improved tender process – better specification and evaluation and reduced burden of work – through sharing the work across WHELF institutions
- Improved implementation process, through learning from the work of earlier cohorts
- Procuring a library management system as part of a consortium enabled NHS Wales libraries to select and implement a high-end system that would have been unaffordable without the supplier discount offered to WHELF
- Ongoing learning opportunities through engaging with specialists across WHELF, providing a richer and more thorough delivery of training and services
- Provision of a service that has enabled Systems staff to re-direct their resources to 'value added' activities
- Increased potential to expand LMS services through extra functionality not supported in legacy systems
- Improved integration with other University business systems

Background

Founded in 1883, Cardiff University is one of Britain's leading research universities, ranked 5th amongst UK universities in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework for quality and 2nd for impact. The University has over 30,000 FTE students.

The University's 13 libraries hold over 1.2 million printed books, and provide access to more than 500,000 online books and journals. The libraries each specialise in particular subjects, and are located across the University's campuses.

Prior to the WHELF Shared LMS project, Cardiff University's legacy system was a locally hosted Ex Libris Voyager library management system and Primo discovery system. Cardiff University also hosted the service for NHS Wales Libraries.

NHS Wales Libraries are part of the AWHILES partnership; providing health information to support patient care, education, training and research for the staff of NHS Wales, and to Cardiff University students and staff on placement at hospitals across Wales. Libraries are located in each of the major hospitals in Wales. There are 24 libraries in total.

Cardiff University also managed the legacy system for the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.

Benefits from being part of a consortium

Maximising buying power and releasing resources for other projects

Cardiff University would have procured a new system.

However, operating as part of a consortium enabled the University to leverage discounts for the selected system, providing the flexibility to channel the resulting procurement and operational savings to other service areas.

The collaboration on procurement has also been a particular benefit for NHS Wales libraries, for whom it would not have been possible to tender alone for a new system given the limited staff resources in each library.

Reducing risk through sharing knowledge at implementation

Pooling of knowledge and expertise provided operational insights to the functionality and helped address potential risks, providing reassurance for front-line and systems staff.

For example, Cardiff benefited from learning from Swansea University's approach to the migration of e-journals, mitigating a number of identified risks.

Gaining from a dedicated consortium resource

The collaboration process has been very successful with the benefit that future collaboration is now more likely. This has been facilitated by having a dedicated independent resource working across the consortium, which has helped dispersed teams to 'gel'.

Working as a consortium has also helped to leverage additional external funds – for example, Jisc funding for the benefits study. Jisc were particularly interested in sharing the learning from a consortium more widely, and were prepared to provide funding to facilitate this, which they would not have done had the project been restricted to a single institution.

Developing more comprehensive requirements specification

The tender specification and evaluation framework was developed in collaboration with other institutions, which brought in a wider group of expert knowledge to the process.

For instance, Bangor University already had an electronic resource management system and the tender document benefited from being able to draw on Bangor's experience in this area. Cardiff University also had a high-level input to the specification and framework, including input from the IT department. The result was a better prepared tender specification which resulted in a better product being delivered.

Better training and staff development

There have been benefits from shared training across WHELF. A series of mini-meets (hosted get-togethers at one of the partner sites to discuss or explore a specific topic) for different areas of functionality were of particular value.

Sharing expertise and knowledge

In being in the last cohort to go live, Cardiff University and NHS Wales benefited from the experiences of institutions which had implemented in earlier cohorts. This was not only in terms of issues arising from implementation, but also from the revised policies and procedures that others were adapting to the new system. The auto-renewals policy implemented at Swansea University, which went live in the first cohort, was a good example.

Knowledge sharing to develop shared reports has also been useful in analytics, which has enabled the University to achieve more with less resources, ensuring better use of staff time across the partnership.

Enhanced profile for the Library service

Along with the other consortium members, Cardiff University Library was successfully nominated for a Times Higher Education Leadership and Management Award in 2015, which generated recognition and increased the profile of the individual institutions, as well as the collaboration. Cardiff University has contributed to national and international presentations about the initiative, along with other consortium members, and the Programme Manager.

Higher quality service from the use of a next generation LMS

Improved integration with other key university business systems

The new system is synchronised with other University management systems, for example the ID management system. This means that on registering with the University, student data is automatically updated in the Alma patron database, reducing workload for the Systems Team and reducing delays for students in accessing library resources. Typically, during the enrolment period, this was a massive manual task for the Library Systems Team, as reports had to be run several times a day for several

weeks as students enrolled and then expected immediate access to the Library services. This work is now undertaken automatically with minimal intervention from the Systems Team. For University staff, their ID cards are now automatically registered on the Library system so that they can immediately start using the Library rather than waiting to get their cards registered through visiting a library.

For NHS Wales, the benefits have not yet been realised in this area, as different registration systems are in place. However, as the system certainly supports automated user registration, this is being actively discussed for implementation for NHS users in the future

Flexibility of web and browser-based systems

One of the main benefits has come from the new system being web based, which requires far less support at the user/device interface. As Alma is browser based the Systems team no longer has to install Windows clients to PCs, resulting in staff time savings. The benefits have also been realised for NHS Wales, where in the past the staff clients had to be posted out to the libraries on CD-ROM and then loaded onto local PCs. All of this is now managed remotely.

For operational staff, the ability to take devices to books, compared to carrying books to desktop PCs where the system was installed, has also saved time and effort.

The move from a locally hosted to a cloud hosted system has also brought benefits.

System upgrades are much easier and smoother than before, with less impact on staff time. In the past, a system upgrade used to be staff resource intensive, requiring several months effort and testing. The frequency of upgrades (monthly, instead of annual) also provides for quicker resolution of any bugs.

This change will enable the Systems team to focus on other activities.

Improved integration between printed collections and electronic resources

Acquisitions and cataloguing workflows are more integrated, streamlining key functional areas, for example in managing print and electronic journal subscriptions. Staff report that there has been a reduction in the volume of print materials awaiting cataloguing, as throughput has speeded up, and books are getting to the shelves more quickly.

Better analytics driving better service

Creating reports and interrogating the system is now quicker and easier enabling, for example, improved collection management.

Further examples where analytics has driven service improvements include the production of a report on usage of one-day loan items, which showed that these loan types resulted in low use of reading list materials, as students preferred to borrow items with longer loan periods. This report has resulted in a recommendation, currently being implemented, to change all one-day loan items to other loan types.

Enhanced range of functionality improving customer experience

Some customer-facing benefits have been identified here - most notably, for Cardiff University, the introduction of new functionality such as automated renewals has led to a significant reduction in the level of library fines levied. This was a key area of student dissatisfaction and was raised as a major concern of students in the annual 'student written submission' produced by the Students Union for the University Council. The level of fines has dropped significantly since the introduction of the new system - with just over £12,000 fines levied by the end of January 2017, compared to over £264,000 fines levied in the whole of 2015/16

NHS Wales has not introduced the automated renewals feature, but the libraries do not, on the whole, levy fines on their users. However, the NHS libraries have reported other service benefits.

Pre-implementation, NHS Library staff reported that the most requested functionality from customers was to see their loan history, which was not possible in Voyager but is provided for in Alma.

NHS staff also commented that they could not previously access the NHS e-library resources through Voyager, which is now being addressed with resources being added to Primo, giving a better service for both library staff and users.

Annex

Further background information on Cardiff University and the NHS Wales is provided here, including:

- Project delivery
- Counterfactual scenario, which describes what the University and NHS Wales would have done had they not pursued a consortial approach as part of WHELP
- Methodology for the case study

Project delivery

There were a variety of drivers to Cardiff University and the NHS Wales procuring for a new library management system. The legacy system was nearing end of life and next generation systems promised many benefits: increased workflow efficiencies freeing up staff to provide more 'added value' support in a time of increasing student expectations; efficiency savings, enabling the libraries to do more with less; and improved system resilience and availability.

Undertaking the project as part of the WHELP consortium also offered the opportunity to drive down costs for procurement and ongoing system costs, as well as the potential to offer enhanced services across Wales through further collaboration once the system was implemented.

The implementation across WHELP was delivered in three phases. Cardiff University and NHS Wales was in the final phase. In early 2016 work commenced on implementation, which was completed on 3rd August 2016.

The project within Cardiff and the NHS was managed by a project team which was answerable to the University Library Senior Management Executive, via the LMS Programme Board.

User groups comprising of Library staff across functional areas were set up for consultation during the planning and implementation phases, and for cascading information through to all staff within the library services, and to library customers.

Representatives from each user group were assigned to liaise with their counterparts in the partner institutions to learn from their experiences.

NHS Wales input was managed via the NHS Partnerships Lead and a member of the Library Systems Team assigned to liaise with the NHS libraries on their requirements (both based in Cardiff University).

The WHELP programme manager was based at Cardiff University, providing consortium level oversight. At the local level, the Cardiff University project manager was supported by an implementation team of IT specialists and library personnel also based at Cardiff.

Counterfactual scenario

In the absence of a WHELP Shared LMS project it is likely that Cardiff University would have procured a new system - next generation and cloud hosted- within the same timeframe. It is likely that NHS Wales would have been part of the independent procurement, and it is possible that the Royal Welsh College for Music and Drama would also have been of the procurement exercise.

Case study methodology

A series of focus groups and one-to-one interviews were carried out in order to gain a full understanding of the benefits to Cardiff University. This was also informed by earlier work undertaken at the National Library of Wales which had completed a 'systems review' of the new shared library facility with the public and staff.

Qualitative feedback was gathered through three focus groups with Library staff held at Cardiff University. Staff attending the focus groups were recruited to represent a variety of roles within the service; Library Assistants with a primary responsibility for serving Library customers with day-to-day enquiries, Acquisitions staff, Collections Librarians responsible for cataloguing and metadata, and Subject Librarians with a responsibility for academic engagement.

One-to-one interviews were also held with other key members of staff including the Deputy Librarian, change managers, members of the project implementation team and the project manager. Face-to-face interviews were also held with NHS staff at the University Hospital of Wales, Cardiff and Singleton Hospital, Swansea.

To obtain the views of as wide a group as possible, the interim results of the study were presented at a workshop for the wider project group from all the partner institutions.

It was originally intended to survey the Library user base as part of this study, however this was not possible as most of the study was undertaken whilst the student population were on vacation.