



Libraries NI

Digitally transforming the library experience



Libraries NI wanted to create a digital platform to transform library services throughout Northern Ireland, whilst maintaining secure access to its physical and digital assets. Fujitsu's managed service allows Libraries NI to extend book lending services through digital channels, in the face of budgetary constraints. It enables self-service throughout 50+ libraries, underpinned by a reliable and secure platform, thereby improving the user experience.

Challenge

Establish a digital platform to transform library services throughout Northern Ireland, whilst protecting physical and digital assets.

Solution

Digitalization of library services with enhanced security and support services.

Outcomes

- Achieved 90% user satisfaction despite a £1 million cut in annual budgets
- Increased rate of borrowing of eBooks, audiobooks, eNewspapers, and eMagazines through digital channels, since the COVID-19 lockdown
- Responded quickly to changing customer needs, whilst retaining position at the heart of many local communities.

“Libraries are a valued and trusted resource at the heart of communities, providing space and opportunities for people to learn and to connect.”

Desi Curry, Head of ICU and ICT, Libraries NI

Industry: **Public Services**
Location: **Northern Ireland**
Website: **librariesni.org.uk/**

People: **930**

About the customer

Libraries NI was established in April 2009 and is the public library service for Northern Ireland. Library services are free for members and are delivered through a network of 96 branch libraries, two heritage libraries, 16 mobile libraries and 10 home call vehicles across Northern Ireland. The organization's mission is to connect people with information, ideas and experiences to foster lifelong learning, inspire curiosity, provide enjoyment and strengthen communities.



25%

of adults in Northern Ireland have used Libraries NI services in the last year

Improving access to library services

"Libraries are important places for people to connect with information, IT, reading, heritage, learning and people from their community," says Desi Curry, Head of ICU and ICT, Libraries NI. Libraries play a vital role as community hubs offering a wide range of services including free-to-use public access computers, a reliable broadband and Wi-Fi network, access to heritage information and IT training courses to help customers use computers and the Internet.

Local libraries host various social activities such as knit and natter groups, tea and newspaper groups, rhythm and rhyme sessions, reading groups and Lego clubs for children of all ages. The service offering of libraries has grown considerably as they have adapted to support the demands of the communities they serve.

The challenge for Libraries NI is to create spaces that encourage community adoption, yet never lose the importance of books and reading. The objective is to make libraries as accessible as possible by extending opening hours and simplifying the task of reserving, borrowing and returning books. By opening digital channels, it provides staff the opportunity to further engage with the community.

Modernizing the way users engage with libraries

Fujitsu's managed services contract goes back to 2013 and it has overseen a diverse range of digital transformation projects. But it is in the libraries themselves that the engagement has been most visible.

Fujitsu has RFID-tagged each individual item in the Libraries NI inventory, numbering more than 2.5 million books, albums and DVDs. Self-service machines are installed in many of the libraries, allowing users to borrow and return items without the need of assistance from library staff; this frees valuable resources to focus on other activities.

Fujitsu has put robust security controls in place to ensure Libraries NI is protected from cyber threats which have become more prevalent and malicious. This multi-layered approach includes endpoint protection, configuration management, firewall security, traffic flow and data segregation, web and email security, certificate services and operational security management. All of this plays a fundamental role, with security by default and privacy by design underpinning the Libraries NI solution.

Creating a platform for constant evolution

Curry says the modernization program will develop as the library's role in society continues to grow. The engagement with Fujitsu establishes a platform on which Libraries NI can deliver new, digital services and react quickly to local demands.

For Libraries NI, Fujitsu has implemented an 'Out of Hours' library concept in seven rural libraries. Through the 'Out of Hours' concept, customers can access the library to use a range of important facilities on a self-service basis. "This pilot 'Out of Hours' service provides the local communities with more options to use library facilities at a time that suits them, for up to an additional 38 hours per week," says Curry. "The Fujitsu engagement means we have the tools to try this."

"Overall, one quarter of the adult population has used Libraries NI services in the past year, with a 90% user satisfaction rating despite a £1m cut in annual budgets. Borrowing of eBooks, audiobooks, eNewspapers and eMagazines through digital channels has increased significantly since the COVID-19 lockdown", adds Curry.

Perhaps the greatest success is the ability for libraries to evolve and respond quickly to changing customer needs, whilst retaining their position in the heart of many local communities.

"By engaging with more of our users we better understand their needs," says Curry, "that understanding will inform our future services".

Fujitsu

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