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Desi Curry
Head of ICU and ICT
Libraries NI



Libraries NI, Northern Ireland’s public library service, selected Fujitsu as its managed service provider to replace its entire IT assets, and freeing up internal resources.

At a glance

Country: UK
Industry: Public Sector
Founded: 2009
Website: www.librariesni.org.uk

Challenge

Libraries NI wanted to find one single managed service partner to upgrade its whole technology environment across all its 98 libraries in order to reduce costs, increase reliability and boost performance.

Solution

Fujitsu replaced all technology assets, including over 2,000 devices and printers as well as servers and storage. Each individual item in the Libraries NI inventory was also RFID tagged by Fujitsu and Libraries NI staff- over 2.5 million books, albums and DVDs.

Benefit

- RFID self-service kiosks and Smart Gates reduce the administration of book loans (enabling front line staff to perform higher value tasks) and provide book security and visit count
- Reduced administrative overheads through the consolidation and streamlining of the IT assets
- Dual data centres ensure reliability and robust business continuity arrangements
- Faster network speeds and enhanced security features deliver improved public internet access

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 organisation's aim is to connect people with information, ideas and experiences to foster lifelong learning and inspire curiosity.

Products and services

- FUJITSU Server PRIMERGY
- FUJITSU Storage ETERNUS
- FUJITSU Managed Infrastructure Services
- FUJITSU network management across 100+ locations
- FUJITSU end-user device provision and management

Re-building IT infrastructure

For over fifteen years, libraries have served as the de facto public provider of free internet access in Northern Ireland. When its existing IT contract expired in 2013, Libraries NI looked to find a new partner that could deliver internet provision along with all corporate back-end functions.

"We wanted to introduce fully integrated systems across the board for library business, HR, payroll and other key applications rather than have individual, siloed systems," explains Desi Curry, Head of ICU and ICT, Libraries NI. "We also wanted to welcome new innovations such as self-service kiosks using RFID technology."

Libraries NI pulled together all its past experience and lessons learnt to formulate an RFP that called for the refresh of 'everything with a plug on it'. This included public internet, corporate applications, networks, end-user devices, servers and storage. As a public sector organisation in a time of austerity, cost was a key criterion, however, Libraries NI also wanted a partner that understood the business and could deliver quality service and solutions.

"I was never in any doubt that the Fujitsu team understood the business and what we wanted to achieve at both a strategic and technological level and as a result, they put much effort and expertise into their bid," adds Curry.

This commitment and insight led Libraries NI to select Fujitsu as its primary IT partner. The challenge then was to transform the entire IT infrastructure of Northern Ireland's library estate from the ground up.

A streamlined service

Fujitsu and Libraries NI developed a 15-month transition plan which would ensure that libraries would be kept operational with minimal disruption as the migration took shape.

"We defined 17 workstreams, which we could tackle sequentially, including the SirsiDynix Library Management System, fibre network installation and replacing the hardware," continues Curry.

Over the course of the transition, Fujitsu replaced all technology assets from tablets and printers to servers and switches. Each individual item in the Libraries NI inventory was also RFID tagged – over 2.5 million books, albums and DVDs. These tags work with the self-service kiosks and security gates to facilitate streamlined and integrated library services.

"In total, over 2,000 devices were replaced in addition to the creation of two new data centres which ensure resilience and robust business continuity," says Curry. "Fujitsu also worked with telephony and network partners to enhance and secure Wi-Fi access across the estate."

Quick and reliable self service

Libraries NI now has one single Managed Service Provider, reducing administrative overheads while simplifying and consolidating the technology infrastructure. At the same time, it enjoys more modern devices and services, which allow its staff to focus their resources on higher-value tasks.

"The RFID and Library Management software enable customers to seamlessly manage their own library account as well as access internet and office automation services," comments Curry. "Our employees can therefore concentrate less on transactional business and instead deliver additional programmes and support to customers."

The introduction of self-service has proven so successful that it has been extended from the 20 busiest libraries to a total of 39 locations across Northern Ireland. This makes the business of borrowing and returning items more efficient while reducing the burden on employees. The new interlinked systems managed by Fujitsu also boast optimal reliability and availability.

"Fujitsu ensures we are always up to date with the latest software updates and patches, while the inclusion of two data centres means that if anything does go wrong we have in-built resilience," remarks Curry. "However, so far the reliability has been solid from the tablets and PCs to the network and back-end hardware."

"During challenging times, due to budget cuts and economic austerity, the free computer use with broadband and Wi-Fi, along with other digital services for customers such as eBooks and eMagazines, has positioned the library as a community hub, offering a range of valued services in an inclusive and welcoming environment for everyone."

"This was a massive exercise with significant risk as well as potential legal and commercial liabilities. However, Fujitsu took care of everything technical and this is now viewed as one of the most positive public sector projects in the region," concludes Curry. "We haven't stopped looking forward and are planning to build and develop more leading solutions for our visitors."

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