

I'll have two murders, one romance but hold the westerns...

Home delivery at Bayside Library Service

Today we can order many things over the internet. We can shop for groceries, order fruit and vegetables, flowers, books and compact discs, Christmas presents, wine, the list goes on and on...

To have a successful online business you need four things:

1. A warehouse stocked with merchandise;
2. A searchable list or catalogue of items available on the web;
3. Customers — either existing or potential; and
4. An online order form.

So why not order library books the same way? Select items over the internet and have them delivered to your door?

The Bayside Library Service began to consider this idea about twelve months ago. We already had warehouses [library branches], a web catalogue and existing customers. Through our website customers could join the library, receive the an-

swer to a complex reference enquiry, access information on a subject, download information from our web links, retrieve full-text journal articles, all without setting foot into the library. However if they wanted to read a book, listen to a music CD or watch one of the videos listed in our online catalogue they had to come to the library to borrow them. Home delivery of library materials would eliminate this step offering a full range of library services to patrons without them ever leaving their house.

Bayside Library Service is a council-run library service situated in suburban Melbourne. It is situated about twelve kilometres south of the CBD covering an area of thirty-seven square kilometres and servicing a population of 90 000 people. Forty-seven per cent of the population are registered library members. Bayside is a middle-class area, with forty-five per cent of family incomes exceeding \$52 000. This represents a community profile that indicates a high level of internet usage at home or at work. Sixty-two per cent of the population are aged between 15 and 64 years of age. There has been a high level of interest in internet classes run by the library from people in the 40- to 60-years age range indicating a growth in computer and web-based technology skills.

Bayside has a large number of businesses which operate similar hours to existing library hours, making it difficult for those people to access the library during opening hours.

Australian Bureau of Statistics figures also indicate that as age increases the incidence of computer and internet usage declines. More than eighteen per cent of the Bayside population are 65 or older. For this reason it was decided that access to the home delivery service should not be limited to those with the ability to access the catalogue via the web.

Our brief was to offer:

- a delivery service that would add value to existing services;
- home or office delivery and pickup of library materials for a fee;
- a service that would be available to all library members over the age of 18 who lived or worked in Bayside; and
- a service that would be available via the web, in person or by phone.

The ingredients for the service were:

- our integrated library management system;
- the library web page;
- a delivery van and driver; and
- a lot of commitment.

How it works

Patrons can access the library database via the web and select items for home delivery in the same manner that they place a reservation. The patron is given the option of either reserving an item or selecting it for home delivery.

If they select home delivery a screen outlining 'conditions of use' appears.

Agreeing to these conditions takes them to a screen where they must submit delivery details such as name, address and specific delivery instructions. This takes into account that the delivery address may be different to their home address.

Submitting these details sends a web form to the home delivery e-mail address which is printed out the next morning. The web form prints out as a two-part invoice: Part A is the delivery invoice and Part B is the pickup invoice.

The patron is then taken to the 'place reservation' screen prompting them to enter their borrower number and PIN.

Each subsequent item is selected the same way with the exception of providing delivery instructions.

How we process the request

Early each weekday morning the reservation report alerts staff to items sitting on the shelf that have been reserved or selected for home delivery.

Items for home delivery are routed to library administration where the home delivery branch is located. Items are sorted and then issued to the requesting borrower.

Invoices are printed and matched to the order. The issue slip is attached providing details of goods supplied and the due date (or pickup date!) The form is then photocopied. The original is filed under pickup date and the copy attached to the order.

Items are then packed into large, weather-proof zip-up bags. Bags were chosen rather than boxes so that borrowers choosing to return the items (rather than have them collected) could return the bag along with the items through the out-of-hours returns chute.

Australian Library and Information Association

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The Scholarship is open to practising library technician members of the Library Technician Section of the Association.

Nomination forms are available from
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This scholarship is jointly-sponsored by
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ALIA

The invoice is enclosed with the order and a print copy of the *Home delivery conditions of use*. Goods are delivered as per instructions and a calling card left in the letterbox or office reception desk.

Pickup

Patrons are advised that items will be collected on the due date unless they advise us otherwise. In theory they would contact library administration by phone to renew items or alter pickup date. This cannot always be relied on.

Two days prior to the pickup date patron records are checked to see if the items are still on loan with the same due date as indicated on the delivery invoice.

A courtesy phone call is then made to the patron reminding them that their items are due for pickup and to have them ready or leave them out for collection.

When items have been collected an invoice for the pickup of items is left in the letterbox or office counter. Pickup charges are waived if this coincides with a new delivery to the same address.

Non-web selection of items

Patrons can also phone in a request for items to be home-delivered. They can also select items at a library branch and

then request that the items be delivered.

In each case the staff would process the request on their behalf.

Progress to date

Home delivery has been operational for four months. As yet we have done little to market the service. Current use of the service has been limited. We have regular customers who phone and request deliveries and occasional use by people who have a short-term illness or inability to come to the library. Web usage has not taken off at this stage. Our next step is to embark on a marketing campaign to promote awareness of this service.

The future

The library system will be modified to streamline the selection and payment options. E-commerce will allow for payment to be made online. Items will be selected using a shopping cart with the option to submit the order completing a batch process that would tag the items, send order details and automate printing of delivery dockets and accounts.

Patrons will visit the Bayside Library Service webpage for the first time and be given the option of setting up a profile of their favourite authors and reading interests. Other information such as horoscopes, share-market news, daily news

headlines and so on will be available if they choose.

When patrons log into the webpage for the second time, they will be greeted by name and given recommendations for new books by their favourite author or a new book or a subject that interests them. Clicking on a link will take them to a review of the book and a thumbnail image of its dust jacket. The item can be selected for delivery as soon as it comes in.

Special collections such as e-books and bestseller collections will be available for instant delivery. The newest titles in bookstores which usually have long waiting lists will be available that day for a fee. E-books will be downloaded into home computers for a specified 'loan period' on completion of a credit-card transaction.

Local businesses will subscribe to specialised online information databases, access council statistical data, GIS system and rates information. This will be a means of making this data available to those who need to use it and a way of raising revenue.

The software for much of this already exists in various forms. It needs to be adapted to our purposes and tailored for the needs of libraries. ■

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