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Change management and return on investment

In 2002 17 libraries on the campus Arenberg, varying in collection size from 25.000 volumes up to 100.000 were moved to a new campus library CBA. Most libraries had limited professional staff, sometimes only the librarian himself. Back-office tasks e.g. acquisitions, cataloguing, ILL etc. were delivered by the campus library services. Most libraries were closed at 5 p.m. and during vacation periods they had limited opening hours. With a large collection of 1 million volumes and with a limited staff of 21 FTE it was not possible to challenge the future.

Now the library has large opening hours from 8.30 a.m. until 10 p.m. during the week and on Saturday from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. with the same staff (21 FTE).

The open access collection comprises more than 250.000 volumes. The monographs are brought together in large categories and related disciplines are clustered. This clustering system is also reflected by cluster councils, representatives of the departments, custodians of the collection and budget. We have 6 clusters, 5 technical and 1 especially for the bachelors.

The difficulties that we encountered and our solutions (new features that were implemented to handle with repetitive actions):

1. How did we cope with larger opening hours with the same number of staff ?

We split the opening hours in two parts; the normal business hours from 8.30 a.m. until 6 p.m. and the evening hours from 6 until 10 p.m. During the evening hours there is only one staff member, supported by 1 or two students. Only the main circulation desk is open. From here they can monitor the whole library by video cameras and internal communication system. The students are busy with re-shelving and scanning for document delivery. The staff member is performing the normal tasks of the circulation desk and information needs of our customers.

All staff members, without exception have evening or Saturday duties (12 times a year). They are fully trained for circulation tasks

2. The monographs in open access are clustered according to related disciplines. Cluster 1 comprises the disciplines : mechanical engineering, mathematics, computer sciences, electrical and electronics engineering and safety sciences (UDC 5 and 6). Cluster 2 comprises the disciplines : astronomy, physics, chemistry, geology, physical geography, materials science and chemical engineering (UDC 5 and 6).

For a customer it looks a bit chaotic and in a way it is. We were aware that, without a good solution, the staff of the main desk would have had a lot of questions where to locate the books on the shelves.

The solution was the development of a locator. <http://wbib.kuleuven.be/locator>

Looking for subjects on the shelves or retrieving a book found in the catalogue can be done with the locator.

This was the first solution in the automation of repetitive processes.

3. The RFID solution. To improve easy circulation we implemented in 2002 a complete RFID-solution for the circulation process. Our target was to reduce staff assistance to a minimum. All monographs and some journals were equipped with RFID-tags. The communication between lending and returning machines and our LMS was done using the SIP-2 protocol. Alarm setting, stacking possibilities, patron status, renewals, pre-sorting according to cluster number are fully operated.

These three improvements reduced the number of staff needed at the circulation desk with 2.5 FTE and reduced the stress of the librarian on duty in the evening and on Saturday.

Automation of repetitive processes and change management are tools to improve the quality of service towards our customers.
