



Manukau Libraries Customers *SignUp* with Pharos

In 2002, Manukau City Council began planning Learn.net, library-based Learning Centres. The goal was to broaden the services available through the city's libraries



Te Kaunihera o
MANUKAU
City Council

Manukau Libraries
NGĀ WHARE MĀTAURANGA O MANUKAU

to support educational and knowledge activities for all community users. The Learn.net concept was designed as a place for people to meet, connect and learn, combining study facilities, internet access, computer software packages, online reference and learning tools and assistance from library staff.

Learn.net was officially launched by Manukau Libraries in June 2003 at Papatoetoe Public Library. Project co-ordinator, Theo ter Borg, is pleased with the outcome. "Having Learn.net is another step into the future for public libraries. Libraries recognize that information and knowledge is no longer the preserve of printed and book resources. Finding a way to provide access to digital information for customers and the community is becoming very important."

Prior to Learn.net, Papatoetoe Public Library had six public access PCs, which has now been increased to eight. Overseeing and mediating the use of these PCs was a lot of work for library staff. In addition, this administrative interaction with users was sometimes seen in a negative light. "When we were starting up Learn.net, we went looking for a system that would manage IT services for us, save staff time and improve relationships with our customers," says Theo. "We could see that use of IT in the libraries would increase, so we were planning for the future."

"This throughput is really great for a public library - plenty of people are getting the opportunity to use the PCs."

After surveying the market options, Manukau Libraries chose Pharos Systems SignUp and Uniprint software. SignUp interfaces with the user to provide the PC management function while Uniprint manages the printing function.

Because the system is relatively new to the Papatoetoe community, the demand for staff involvement is still high while library users are being introduced to the system and taught about signing on. However, the stress

levels associated with managing the PCs are much reduced because SignUp handles all scheduling and enforcement. Staff stresses are also reduced because Datacom handles all system administration and support of the PCs. It isn't difficult to get problems resolved. "Both Pharos and Datacom have been supportive, and very responsive to our needs," says Theo.

"The bonus is that children who learn to use the system come back after school. All these children have been here with their classes. Isn't that great?"

About Datacom

Datacom is a large and successful NZ-owned IT company employing over 1,000 people. The company's Library Business unit provides and manages IT solutions for libraries. Having been working with NZ libraries since 1986 Datacom has a detailed knowledge of library operations and successfully delivers and supports IT initiatives for many libraries, both public and tertiary.

About Manukau Libraries

With over 12 branches, a mobile library, reference reading room, and 5 rural libraries, Manukau Libraries serves New Zealand's third largest and most ethnically diverse city. The Libraries vision *Live, Learn, Grow* recognizes the important contribution that high quality library and information services makes to the social, cultural and economic well-being of people in Manukau.



¹Manukau Libraries Learn.net brochure



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Once signed up with the system, users can reserve a PC session in advance or simply log on to any PC when they wish to use Learn.net. SignUp automatically manages all time and reservation processes, telling a user what to do next and when their time is used up. Library members have a time limit of one hour; non-library members thirty minutes. After school, the system can give priority to adult bookings or to those with an urgent need for the computer. User printing is held for release at a separate station, proceeding to print once the user makes payment. The library charges users for internet access and printing and both charges and payments are handled automatically by the Pharos software.

Users have responded well. Staff members have received very little negative feedback. In fact, the ease of the system has encouraged a cross-section of users to jump on to the PCs. Not only school children but senior citizens have been learning to sign up and check their email and research subjects of interest. "It is very user friendly - not difficult to use at all," says Theo. "In the public library environment there is a range of user sophistication so this ease of use is very important."

Over the first 3-4 months of operation the system, SignUp has handled approximately 2000 sessions per month at an average of 30 minutes per person. The library's expectation at the beginning of the project was that an hour wouldn't be long enough, so they are surprised and pleased at the relative consistency of the time. "This throughput is really great for a public library - plenty of people are getting the opportunity to use the PCs."

Theo has some advice for other public libraries considering technology management systems. "Be very clear what you want it for. Work out how you want your customers to be able to use it and work from there. We began with a Learning Centre concept so it was important that the system facilitated learning. We wanted school groups to come into the library and use it. So our PC area is also equipped with a projector set. We are pleased at the success of the implementation.

At the moment we have a class of primary school children coming in for one of our specially developed training programs nearly every day." Theo indicated the group of children clustered around two of the PCs. "The bonus is that children who learn to use the system come back after school. All these children have been here with their classes. Isn't that great?"



About Pharos Systems

Pharos Systems has been solving customer problems for the last 10 years. Today, Pharos products are used extensively in more than 16 countries to provide knowledge and control to IT professionals - making their jobs easier and their investments more productive.

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