

CASE STUDY

Library and Information Service, Department of Human Services

Library sets new benchmark highs

About the Library and Information Service, Department of Human Services

The Department of Human Services' mission is to protect and enhance the health and wellbeing of all Victorians. It is Victoria's largest government department and its responsibility extends across many portfolios: health; mental health and drugs; housing; aged care; children and disability. The Department of Human Services (DHS) also funds organisations such as hospitals, aged care facilities, ambulance services and community service agencies.

Virginia Staggs, the Manager of the Library and Information Service (LIS) for DHS knows that better information results in better decisions. She ensures that quality knowledge based information is provided in a timely and efficient way to support staff in planning, research, decision-making and health service delivery.

LIS focuses on providing access to information via its employees' desktops. There's one library location in Melbourne with seven staff but they provide an information service to the entire organisation of 13,000 employees, spread across regional and metropolitan Victoria. This means they must provide an online service.

Library challenge

LIS wanted a narrative on what users thought about the service so they could make informed decisions to improve delivery and access. Basic usage statistics already collected didn't provide useful qualitative data.

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Manager of the Library and Information services
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The library had put an enormous amount of work into its electronic resources and also wanted to find out how easy or difficult usage was. It was important to understand users' experience on the library's web pages and make changes to incorporate feedback.

A client satisfaction survey would help their strategic planning. Like any other organisation LIS has resource constraints. They wanted to know which areas they should prioritise.

“ We enjoyed working with specialised Insync Surveys staff... ”

The solution

Developed by Insync Surveys, the Library Client Survey would enable LIS to identify key client concerns and find out the areas in which the library performs well. The opinions and concerns of the clients would be considered as part of the management team's commitment to service improvement.

By using Insync Surveys as a third party, the survey was completed anonymously. Confidentiality ensured true concerns of clients could be gathered.

In order to get the correct information from survey respondents, the questions had to be phrased properly. Insync Surveys assisted the library so the questions were properly worded for valid responses.

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The results

Two new benchmark highs were set by the DHS Library and Information Service in comparison with other libraries that were surveyed by Insync Surveys in the last two years.

The first was in the communication category for the variable: “library staff keep me informed about new resources and additions to the collection”. The score achieved was higher than any of the other libraries in the survey database.

Respondents were also asked to provide a general assessment of their satisfaction with the library. In this case, the overall average of 5.90 placed LIS above the top of the first quartile (top 25%) when compared with other libraries in the Insync Surveys database. This provided LIS with its second benchmark high.

Quantitative data obtained on the performance of DHS Library and Information Service compared to other libraries was also positive. Overall, clients are very satisfied and an overall satisfaction score of 81.2% was achieved. This indicated a result in the top 25% when compared with other libraries in the Insync Surveys database.

In any library service, good staff are its greatest asset. The survey results validated this. LIS performed highest in the category of “library staff” achieving a score of 90.2%. This is a great achievement for the library team.

The survey results showed a good alignment to client expectations, with no critical areas for concern. However, the survey did identify opportunities for improvement, including: enhanced access to the catalogue and electronic resources via “Library on your desktop”, and ease of finding current information on the website. Work to improve these areas has now begun.

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The survey also included open questions so clients could freely comment on service quality. Insync Surveys' analysis of themes in respondents' comments enabled a deeper understanding of clients' needs and experiences.

Michael Samarchi is Insync Surveys' library industry specialist and he has extensive experience as a librarian himself.

"We enjoyed working with specialised Insync Surveys staff. Michael Samarchi trained as a librarian; his experience and knowledge as an insider was of great benefit. He worked closely with us throughout the project which was great," said Ms Staggs.

Throughout the survey period Virginia Staggs received daily reports on progress and response rates. She could then target particular demographics before the close of the survey to get the best possible overall response from both metropolitan and regional clients.

"The whole experience was good. We thought we were doing okay, but this survey showed us how well we were performing in the context of other libraries. It validated our performance," commented Ms Staggs.

The LIS intends to run the Library Client Survey in two years time, so that performance can be monitored over time and against client needs. The aim is to continue to build on high levels of service and quality. Benchmarking their performance against other Australian libraries is an added incentive.

About Insync Surveys

Insync Surveys is a 2009 *BRW* Fast 100 company. With offices in Melbourne, Sydney, Perth, we deliver customer, employee, board and other stakeholder surveys for some of the largest organisations in Asia Pacific, including: Cathay Pacific, Foster's, Toll, AXA, Medibank Private, WorleyParsons, the New South Wales Department of Community Services, the Victorian Department of Primary Industries, Tourism Western Australia, iiNet, Fairfax Digital, Melbourne Cricket Club, many local councils, most university libraries, Mission Australia and World Vision. This experience allows us to benchmark your results. Insync Surveys' organisational psychologists help your organisation to improve performance and the working lives of your people.

Visit: www.insyncsurveys.com.au
Contact us: info@insyncsurveys.com.au

Melbourne
Level 7
91 William Street
Melbourne, VIC 3000
Australia
Tel. +61 3 9909 9209
Fax. +61 3 9614 4460

Sydney
Level 2
110 Pacific HWY
North Sydney, NSW 2060
Australia
Tel. +61 2 8081 2000
Fax. +61 2 9955 8929

Perth
76 Wittenoom Street
East Perth, WA 6004
Australia
Tel. +61 8 6461 6485
Fax. +61 8 6270 4491