

County of Los Angeles Public Library



Case Study

The County of Los Angeles Public Library deploys more than 100 SirsiDynix PocketCirc® handheld circulation devices to expand the reach and productivity of the 86-branch system.

“Technical services staff use it for opening day collections, then the PocketCircs in the library are used by everyone from library assistants to circulation desk managers... It’s constantly being used.”

— Howard Kovensky

*County of L.A. Public Library
Staff Development Specialist*

When the County of Los Angeles Public Library prepared to open its new Sorensen branch this year, an opening-day collection of 18,000 materials awaited them on pallets. L.A. County Library Assistant Director Migell Acosta, who has been through quite a few openings in his time, said they generally allocate two weeks for this process. The Sorensen opening collection, aided by a handful of SirsiDynix PocketCirc® mobile circulation devices, was completed in one day.

“[Without the PocketCirc devices] we probably would have had to drag each item to a desktop computer, which is so much slower given that there are only maybe three to five PCs that are available and that you can get to,” Acosta said. “It would have been a mess. Now we keep 20 PocketCircs on hand just for these types of projects.”

With a staff of 10 – each equipped with a SirsiDynix PocketCirc mobile circulation tool – the library’s opening day collection was processed in record time, enabling the branch to open its doors sooner than anticipated.

“Just open a box, hit it with the PocketCirc to scan the barcode, then get it on the shelf,” Acosta said of the process. And that is just the beginning of the uses the L.A. County Library has found for its army of now 100+ PocketCirc mobile circulation aids.

Empowering mobile outreach

Formerly on a DRA classic system, in 2008 L.A. County upgraded to the new SirsiDynix Symphony® ILS – during which time they saw holds go from 2,000 to 10,000 per day – and with it purchased 110 PocketCirc mobile circulation devices.

With 130,000 books and materials circulated annually via L.A. County’s four bookmobiles alone, there is a lot of ground covered and a lot of information to track. So the County put a handful of the new PocketCirc handhelds – managed en masse via the Library’s use of MobiControl™ by SOTI – to use in its bookmobiles and saw operations improve immediately.

“[The bookmobile staff] were just doing circulation by hand before. That was for their day-to-day circ; they were not connected to the internet while they were out on their routes at that time,” Acosta said. “So this became their new tool.”

The lack of internet connection at many of the bookmobile route locations had previously been an obstacle, but with the PocketCirc



devices operating in “offline” mode, the staff could now scan and check books in and out, with or without access to the internet. This increased functionality was not only convenient for the staff, but also improved the overall efficiency of the Library’s mobile outreach efforts, which benefit some 5,000 patrons throughout the county.

Uses within the library

The mobile applications of the PocketCirc tools were obvious, L.A. County staff development specialist Howard Kovensky said. But some of the really interesting and handy uses for the PocketCirc devices actually emerged within the walls of the library facilities. After testing the devices and using them locally around the Library’s administrative facilities for inventory and other projects, they held training for about an hour and began pushing them out for use at all the L.A. County libraries, where they are now utilized on a daily basis.

In addition to regular use of the PocketCirc checkout wizard to audit the delivery of opening-day collections, the devices are used for desk counts, backup circulation and even weeding collections, because of the convenience of just checking an item out and withdrawing it right there “without having to drag them back to the circulation desk.”

Similarly, for tracking pickup count within the library, PocketCirc mobile tracking enables library staff to be more agile and saves significant time on the back-and-forth. It improves accounting as well. Last year alone, using its PocketCirc devices, the County of Los Angeles Public Library tracked more than 5 million uses of material within the library – that’s an extra almost 36 percent on top of its standard annual circulation of roughly 14 million.

Reading between the lines

Kovensky can tell you about some “pretty handy” built-in features – such as checking an item status to get live updates on where it is or where it should be going, putting an item in transit to ship remotely, and more – but software aside, the L.A. County staff have found numerous additional benefits in their PocketCirc handheld devices.

Similarly, because the devices are equipped with a wi-fi sensor and meter, Kovensky said they have used it to create a wireless “heat map” of the library, giving a hard ranking to the wi-fi strength in various areas of a facility.

But conventionally or unconventionally, within the library or off-site, the L.A. County Library staff and patrons are benefitting through use of their PocketCirc tools continuously.

“Technical services staff use it for opening day collections, then the PocketCircs in the library are used by everyone from library assistants to circulation desk managers. The bookmobiles use it all day when they’re out, five days a week,” Kovensky said. “It’s constantly being used.”

ABOUT THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES PUBLIC LIBRARY

With 86 branches covering 51 of the 88 cities in L.A. County, the County of Los Angeles Public Library serves a population of more than 3 million people over 3,000 square miles. Topping 14 million in annual circulation, the Library is actually a system of libraries spanning West Hollywood, Malibu, Catalina, Lancaster and beyond. There is no large central library, rather a series of local community libraries organized within five main geographic regions, each of which has 12-19 library locations. The Library’s administrative headquarters in Downey, California, facilitates maintenance, resources and material sharing across the entire county.



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