nielsen

AN UNCOMMON SENSE OF THE CONSUMER™

CASE STUDY: SURREY LIBRARIES

BUCKING THE DOWNWARD TREND USING NIELSEN BOOK DATA

Copyright © 2016 The Nielsen Company. All rights reserved.

CASE STUDY: SURREY LIBRARIES

Bucking downward trend using Nielsen data

An article published in The Guardian in 2012 highlighted the decline in children reading Non-Fiction books and increasing concern from authors that the genre is in terminal decline. It called on publishers and libraries to reverse the slide or risk depriving children, particularly boys, of vital reading material. With the interests of the target audience dominated by online resources it is a national problem and one that isn't being addressed in the retail sector. Is it therefore an opportunity for libraries to fill the gap? Liam Dixon and his team at Surrey Libraries think so! They have worked really hard to revitalise this category and have successfully reversed this trend with the help of Nielsen's range of library services.

Surrey Library Service is one of the departments comprising Surrey County Council's Cultural Services division. The mission of Cultural Services is to enhance the quality of life of the County by providing its statutory service responsibilities efficiently and to deliver accessible, high quality, inspirational and enjoyable cultural and learning activities and information to everyone living in or visiting Surrey. Surrey Libraries subscribe to Nielsen BookData Online, Nielsen BookScan for Libraries and are a participant on the Nielsen LibScan panel (Nielsen's library borrowing data collection service).

Liam Dixon has been in the book trade for over twenty years. He began his career on the commercial side of the trade working as a manager for a number of book retailers including Dillons, Hammicks, Books Etc and Waterstones. He then moved to the public side of the trade and has been a librarian with Surrey Library Service since 2008. He has used Nielsen Book's services in his previous roles and understands the value of data. He has therefore been able to apply his experience from his retail roles to library stock selection and introduce new concepts to his library colleagues. *"Nielsen Book's library services are excellent tools which help broaden our selection. We can see what people are buying and borrowing and use that information to inform our selection"* says Liam.

Woking Library

When Liam joined Surrey Libraries he quickly ensured they were part of the Nielsen LibScan panel. The training Nielsen provided when Surrey joined was really beneficial and while he admits that it took some time for the library staff to get used to using the service they quickly saw the benefits.

"The challenge for libraries is that when you purchase 100 titles they keep coming back. In a bookshop, once those titles are sold you can make new selections. In a library you need to make your purchases count!"

Copyright © 2016 The Nielsen Company. All rights reserved.

Junior Non-Fiction – What a difference fresh stock can make!

Surrey Libraries has been using Nielsen LibScan and Nielsen BookScan for Libraries to rejuvenate their Junior Non-Fiction selection. The target audience for this category is 5 to 11 year olds for whom the world moves very quickly and their time and interests are dominated by online resources. The stock and the way it's presented needs to be eye catching and work very hard to compete with these online distractions.

Surrey Libraries initially concentrated on two sites: Woking and Dorking and have found that with the right investment they have turned the downward trend on its head.

When they started looking at their stock they found that there was an emphasis on frontlist titles. This was accounting for around 90% of their budget and resulted in a random mix of frontlist titles and a selection of backlist titles which weren't being reviewed. For example some titles dated back to Nelson Mandela's captivity and before Princess Diana's death!

"Our collections were a hit and miss affair, the range was very patchy and very dated and this was a consequence of investing so heavily in frontlist. The insight provided by the Nielsen suite of tools confirmed that rebuilding range and relevance could not be achieved through frontlist purchasing alone. Investment had to be balanced between frontlist and backlist purchasing."

Using Nielsen LibScan and Nielsen BookScan for Libraries data, Surrey were able to see that some of the most popular titles in Junior Non-Fiction were not necessarily published in the last 12 months. This opened Liam's teams eyes to the fact that they should not just be concentrating on frontlist titles. They set about weeding out a high proportion of the stock using staff knowledge and the age of the books, removing much of what was purchased pre 2005. Surrey Libraries used Nielsen BookData Online with their other services to check bibliographic data and create lists which could then be exported as a spreadsheet and bulk uploaded into their library suppliers shopping basket, enhancing their selection.

They also took into consideration Nielsen BookScan data showing the market share of various publishers and found that their current selection was from too wide a range of publishers of varying sizes. The choice of publisher can have a big impact on how well the title performs for its audience and how it stands up to the wear and tear of multiple loans. *"Some titles can look dated more quickly and are therefore less appealing to the target audience. Titles from Usborne and Dorling Kindersley, for example, are eye catching for children and are well proven to stand the test of time"* Liam explained.

Woking Library

Copyright © 2016 The Nielsen Company. All rights reserved.

Surrey also changed the way they display the stock. The section used to be displayed spine out in perfect Dewey order which wasn't a natural way for children to discover titles. It appeared impenetrable so they invested in new zigzag shelving units and turned the stock around, front facing, making the shelves more fun and appealing to their younger readers. They now have shelf edge guiding, based on UKSLC (formerly E4Libraries Codes), which makes the section much more user friendly.

Once the new shelving units had been stocked the team set about running initiatives to promote the new titles. One such example was The Summer Reading Challenge, run by The Reading Agency, which takes place every year during the summer holidays to encourage children to read six library books of their choice. Surrey saw a marked increase in lending while the Challenge was taking place and volunteers were encouraged to tell participants about the non-fiction titles as well as the fiction titles. This is especially important for encouraging boys to read. *"Because of the way they [books] are displayed they do look more inviting, as a result they do seem to be going out more, the boys especially gravitate towards them."* Carole, Library Manager at Shepperton Library.

Following the two pilot schemes in Woking and Dorking, Surrey rolled the plan out to 3 smaller branches: Ash, Horsley and Knaphill. Each of which have also seen significant increases in their loan figures. Surrey then set about applying the scheme to all 52 libraries in its authority. *"We will concentrate on buying new stock and weeding out old titles which are no longer relevant"* said Liam.

Surrey Libraries Junior Non-Fiction

Financial Year to date*, year-on-year Junior Non-Fiction is up 15.5%, that's an amazing 32,000 more Non-Fiction books borrowed and read by the target audience compared to last year.

Junior Non-Fiction issues have risen every single month throughout this financial year and one of the highest rises occurred during the school holidays, with August achieving a 20% year-on-year increase. (Summer Reading Challenge)

** 2014 figures*

The roll out has been welcomed by staff and customers alike, *"It has been well received at Cobham, our readers seem to love it. We have noticed that more stock seems to be issuing, with some families taking out a card's full quota of just junior Non-Fiction! It all looks so much more inviting and attractive. We are very pleased."* Christine, Library Manager at Cobham Library.

Dorking Library

Copyright © 2016 The Nielsen Company. All rights reserved.

In the retail sector, Children's Non-Fiction stock is very limited and this gives libraries the opportunity to fill this gap and bring the books to life. *"At Surrey Libraries we have managed to make the stock in Junior Non-Fiction self-sustaining. We have reduced the stock we hold but increased the number of issues. This means we can refresh stock much more quickly and compete with the other mediums taking up young people's attention such as surfing the internet, computer games and social media."*

Junior Non-Fiction borrowing continues to flourish

This case study was originally published in 2014, since then Liam and his team have completed their roll out of the new Junior Non-Fiction stock offer across all 52 libraries in Surrey and book borrowing continues to rise.

Liam reports *"Surrey residents borrowed in excess of 300,000 Junior Non Fiction items in 2015, and so far in 2016 they're on course for hitting 325,000 issues. Generating 325,000 issues from our stock holding of 56,000 volumes means we will have achieved an average stock turn of 6 by the end of the year which is a fantastic achievement. An average of 6 issues for every book in a year is double the stock turn of 3 that we were achieving at the beginning of this roll out!"*

Liam concludes *"Surrey's continued use of Nielsen Book's Library Services, as part of our Junior Non-Fiction stock offer, makes our stock work twice as hard, doubling our return on investment, and ensuring we provide a far better experience for Surrey residents."*

Conclusion

The use of evidence has been proven by several library authorities to be the key to understanding their users and ensuring that the titles they stock best represent the needs of their visitors. Armed with this knowledge they're better able to reverse current trends and increase their lending figures. The Nielsen LibScan library borrowing service is free to participating authorities and a great way to introduce evidence based selection. Surrey Libraries has taken this principle further and used the link between Nielsen BookScan for Libraries and Nielsen LibScan to look at how titles are performing both in terms of issues and retail sales. This gives them an even better insight into what their users are looking for.

Woking Library

Footnotes

To read The Guardian article:
http://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/sep/28/decline-childrens-non-fiction-must-stop
To read the letter from authors to The Guardian:
http://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/sep/28/children-nonfiction-books-libraries?guni=Article:in%20body%20link

For more information about Nielsen Library Services email: sales.book@nielsen.com
For more information about Surrey Libraries email: liam.dixon@surreycc.gov.uk

Contributors: Liam Dixon, Surrey Library Services, and Stephanie Enderby, Nielsen Book.

Copyright © 2016 The Nielsen Company. All rights reserved.