Highlights:

- Importance of reader request information

- Using Nielsen BookScan and Nielsen LibScan data to aid selection

- Reality checking annual stock selection plans

- Meeting the needs of the local community

Nielsen BookData
Searching and record retrieval online
www.nielsenbookdata.co.uk

Nielsen BookScan
Measuring and analysing demand
www.nielsenbookscan.co.uk

Nielsen BookNet
Integrated electronic ordering
www.nielsenbooknet.co.uk

For more information about Nielsen's products and services for libraries:
www.nielsenbook.co.uk

Written by Nielsen. We would like to thank Susan Wills and the staff at The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea for contributing to this case study.

Using evidence to support public library stock selection

The New World of Evidence

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Libraries (Kensington and Chelsea) is a strong advocate for using evidence to support their stock selection processes and uses Nielsen's range of services to inform their decisions. Not content with just searching for and selecting stock, Kensington and Chelsea are constantly looking for new and innovative ways to use Nielsen BookData Online, Nielsen BookScan for Libraries and Nielsen LibScan to make best use of scarce resources and better predict what their customers might want before they ask for it.

"Reader request information is like gold dust" says Susan Wills, Principle Librarian: Stock and Audience Development, *"and it is a key indicator in helping us judge the success of our stock selection".* All requests are recorded and, using Nielsen BookData Online, requests are judged on their audience appeal, readership level, academic level, format, price and date of publication. Using the lookup service Kensington and Chelsea can then quickly decide whether to buy a title or request it via inter-library loan.

> *"Evidence helps engage our senior managers in the debate about the demands of our customers and the on going impact that has on our budgets."* Susan Wills, Stock Development Manager

On a monthly basis the request report is sent to the stock librarians who monitor the supplier selection and respond to trends. *"Careful monitoring of our stock selection has led us to adjust our fiction selection and develop our specialist collections such as biographies. We've also been able to respond to trends such as the demand for "credit crunch" titles and a dramatic increase in academic title requests from students"* says Susan. Academic titles, mainly of a postgraduate or scholarly interest, have become a major preoccupation for Kensington and Chelsea who have seen the number of requests increase far more than in previous years.

"The evidence we have collected and continue to collect has helped engage our senior managers in the debate about the demands of our customers and the on going impact that has on our budgets. Ultimately we have to resolve the conflicting priorities arising from the diversity of public expectations and this evidence based approach is key to that debate."

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Why do you need evidence?
Nielsen measures book sales and library issues, providing librarians with access to objective, relevant and timely information. Even at the start of the economic crisis, genres such as crafts, knitting and keeping chickens were highlighted as selling well and their popularity has since been reflected in libraries with high issue levels.

Nielsen's information informs librarians' stock decisions and stock revision processes. It also helps promote stock and create reader lists by identifying bestsellers within a particular genre as well as managing the space allocated for each genre within the library. Using the services together allows libraries to compare their lending data with the national picture as well as retail sales, producing some very interesting results. For example Dan Brown's *The Lost Symbol* became an overnight international bestseller and replicated its success in LibScan's lending charts whereas Stephenie Meyer has dominated the BookScan Children's bestseller charts in recent years but has had less of an impact in the LibScan Children's charts. This illustrates the need for librarians to be using both sources of data.

> "Nielsen's services allows us to reality check what we're being told."

Where a bookshop might choose to stock the top six titles, Kensington and Chelsea will select some from the top six and others from the top 20 giving their customers a wider choice. They will also pick out the bestsellers across a range of genres and use the information to spot up-and-coming authors.

"We run author and subject lists and use Nielsen's information to review and update our supplier selection specifications on an annual basis. We regularly run bestseller/issue lists in 25 Dewey areas to ensure we have the most popular books in stock and if we don't, we can then place an order. We have annual stock action plans and their effective implementation means we are not just buying new books or relying on the lists and prices provided by our book suppliers. Nielsen's services allows us to reality check what we're being told."

"We are using Nielsen BookScan for Libraries alongside consumer research to put together our e-book offer. This approach has also been used for the refurbishment of our Notting Hill Gate library which suffered extensive flood damage. We have used Nielsen's services to review and restock the library, in particular non-fiction. With supplier showrooms only displaying the latest titles it is essential to use Nielsen's range of services to identify and replace older titles, giving our customers the best possible choice."

In September 2011 Kensington and Chelsea won the NAG Award for Excellence for their innovative approach to stock development which includes involving the local community in the selection of stock which has led to a greater sense of ownership and interest. This in turn helps to de-mystify the stock selection process and showcases the skills of the acquisition staff.

> "I need robust data to support my stock decisions. When buying new stock we use Nielsen BookScan for Libraries to identify what titles, authors and subjects are selling well; Nielsen LibScan to ascertain which are issuing well locally and nationally and Nielsen BookData Online to check the availability, price and format of that title."

This approach has been used on several projects including working with adult customers to help improve the 'Healthy Eating' stock and the Children's Forum to select stock for the Central Children's Library. Currently they are working with Kensington Palace to promote the Authorities' nationally important biography collection and are using Nielsen BookScan for Libraries and Nielsen LibScan to identify new biography titles.

Conclusion
Kensington and Chelsea have achieved stock selection that closely matches the interests and needs of their local community. Using a range of services has led to increased issue figures and customer satisfaction resulting in real value for money. It has also meant greater job satisfaction amongst staff.

Susan Wills concludes *"Librarians shouldn't be scared of 'Evidence'! It is designed to support professionals, providing us with useful and relevant data. It may challenge your assumptions but it will mean your decisions are more informed and that you spend your budgets confidently and more effectively. This gives me the confidence that I am buying the best stock possible for my customers."*

For more information about Nielsen's services for libraries visit: www.nielsenbook.co.uk or email: libraries.book@nielsen.com

For more information about The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea visit: www.rbkc.gov.uk