CUSTOMER-CENTRIC COMMUNITY LANGUAGES PURCHASING IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

G. STREMPEL

State Library of South Australia, Public Library Services, Adelaide, South Australia, geoff.strempel@sa.gov.au

1. OVERVIEW

South Australia has a strong background of shared resources, network cooperation and centralised provision of service. The State’s 136 libraries have found a way to combine their purchasing power so that even the smallest most remote library obtains the same discounts, and access to choice as the biggest consortium member.

“Public Library Services” (PLS), is a State Government body which works collaboratively with local government, to provide services and projects for the South Australian public library network.

For many years Public Library Services had undertaken the procurement of Community Languages by:

- Managing a centralised collection located at PLS offices called LOTE (Languages Other Than English) materials
- Ordering of materials and cataloguing in over 30 languages from a single supplier, with minimal input over quality or timeliness

This paper provides an overview of the shift from bulk ordering to customer centric purchasing of community languages.

2. THE CHANGE BEGINS

Public Library Services had developed a dynamic responsive and competitive consortium for the purchase of English Language materials across 9 suppliers with excellent outcomes for all stakeholders. Building on this success it was timely to review the methodology and procurement strategies for the purchasing of community languages materials.

A new framework was initiated with

- Dispersal of the Community Languages collection from a central pool to libraries in the network, so that items were available on library shelves for library customers
• Development of a network agreed ROTATION system to manage the sharing of Community Language material in an organised and equitable fashion

• 8 specialist libraries taking on the role of housing the bulk of the Community Languages stock and being the first point of delivery for new Community Language materials

• Monitoring of supplier performance against profiles

While this change provided greater community access to materials and a more organised structure, it did not answer issues of quality of materials or customer responsiveness.

At the time, there was a growing call from the network for more input into what materials were purchased and more timely delivery of materials. Under the current system some orders took up to 12 months to be processed and delivered to PLS.

A different approach was urgently required so that materials could be sent directly to our 8 specialist libraries.

In 2008 PLS staff undertook market research with suppliers and libraries to better understand the supply chain and processing of Community Language Materials as well as alternative models of delivery.

Four major changes took place:

• A tender process led to the selection of a panel of 5 Community Language suppliers for 28 languages

• Customer selection would be trialled immediately. Librarians with expertise in particular languages and community volunteers would be able to select items from lists provided by suppliers

• Two cataloguing houses took on the work of cataloguing and end processing to network standards

• Catalogue records would include a tag which contained sufficient information for the designated specialist library to receive in their new stock and access the catalogue record without any intervention by PLS

Separating the ordering of materials from end processing and cataloguing allowed an increased number of material suppliers to compete to supply materials in their specialist areas. This enabled the language suppliers to do what they did best, purchase materials and provided increased competition with regard to quality and price of materials provided.

3. COMMUNITY LANGUAGES – CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

Our role at PLS had moved towards contract management, working with suppliers, setting and monitoring KPIs and continually assessing and improving ways of doing business, rather than managing stickers and distributing stock.

In 2009-10:

• A panel of 5 Community Language suppliers provided material in 28 languages with 3 of the 5 suppliers sending customer selection lists for 6 languages

• Large orders were broken into 4 parts with the rationale that stock would arrive in staged amounts, delivering new stock throughout the year

• Materials were distributed to two cataloguing houses to spread the work load
In 2010-11:

- A Community Languages Working Party (made up of public library staff) determines the allocation of expenditure per language and by format

- Material will be ordered in only 25 languages, with a target of only 20 languages by 2014

- 4 of the 5 panel suppliers will now provide customer selection lists for 11 languages

- Language expenditure of over $12,000 will be broken into 2 parts, rather than 4, with a final supply date of January in each year. This is to ensure timely delivery, avoid bottlenecks in cataloguing and processing and address non-supply in the current financial year

- All language orders must be filled by the end of January

- Unallocated funds will be available for specific customer requests in any language

The overall procurement process is monitored by the Community Languages Working Party who in a series of meetings agrees on which languages to continue purchasing and determine the funds allocated per language. The group also monitors the quality control of the stock and provides feedback on delivery issues and cataloguing;

It is a consultative and collaborative process that is customer centric in approach

Other processes that assist:

- The specialist libraries indicate languages that they are able to assist with in the selection process

- The Bibliostat statistical package by Baker &Taylor was implemented 2009-10. Bibliostat has provided the Working Party strong statistical evidence to determine:
  - The usage rates of each language across the state
  - Which categories of a language are most in demand, e.g. large print Italian
  - Which languages are in less demand e.g. Dutch, Indonesian and Urdu

  Bibliostat identifies usage by language within the SA public libraries – this information is used to modify the rotation model, encouraging a higher stock turnover

- Examination of recent Settler Arrival statistics and other data regarding CALD community composition. This information assists in setting the global allocation of funds to the Community Languages budget as well as providing information which influences the funding allocation per language

4. ORDERING AND DELIVERY

There are two models of delivery depending on the language

1. For 14 languages, PLS is using the supplier to undertake selection of materials by profile

2. The customer selection model will be increased to 11 languages in 2010-11. We anticipate this model being used for all languages over time with the process ultimately moving to an e-procurement model. This will streamline processes, improve quality and save time and handling and provide great benefits to customer libraries.
5. THE TRENDS

As is the case for English Language materials, world music CDs and Community Language DVDs are in high demand. In 2009 we ordered all music CDs and DVDs from one supplier to give libraries continuity of supply from previous years and avoid duplication.

Over time, the popularity of world music has increased in the community, and consequently what began as a specialist purchase within the Community Languages budget is now being incorporated into the monthly English material selection lists. This is a gradual transition and feedback from network libraries has been positive.

6. CURRENT ISSUES

Public libraries in South Australia are mandated by law to purchase only DVDs that are classified by the Australian Office of Film and Literature Classification. This dramatically reduces the range of titles that can be purchased.

For 2010-11, a different supplier will be given the opportunity to supply DVDs and has been asked to investigate the large range of DVDs that are released ‘exempt from classification’. This should result in a larger range being available for purchase.

In consultation with the network and the Community Languages Committees, a set of agreed and comprehensive cataloguing standards were developed for the cataloguing of Community Languages materials. Cataloguing of Community Languages had previously been very rudimentary, and did not allow for any forms of detailed searching by library customers.

Due to the comprehensive cataloguing required by the network, the cataloguing costs for Community Languages have escalated.

The high cost of cataloguing translates to less material ordered so PLS is now investigating a mid point for cataloguing - somewhere between the original rudimentary and current full records being provided by the cataloguing houses.
7. WHAT ELSE WE OFFER TO OUR CALD COMMUNITIES

- **www.mylanguage.gov.au**: The Mylanguage national subscription is paid for from our Community Languages budget. It provides valuable information, and sometimes the only information, in specific languages e.g. Dinka

- **PressDisplay**: The South Australian library network also purchases a state-wide subscription to PressDisplay, providing instant online access to today’s newspapers from around the world in 46 languages, in full-colour and full-page format. A language translation is available in ten major foreign languages and selections can be made by country or by language. So for example, Gujarati, Kannada and Marathi newspapers can be offered to our customers even if there are no print materials purchased in these languages.

- **www.libraries.sa.gov.au**: Our SA libraries website features both MyLanguage and PressDisplay resources on the homepage and we actively promote their use in many forums.

8. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Within 2 years, we envisage a single library management system for all public libraries in SA. This will have an impact on how we procure, obtain catalogue records, and make our resources available to the community. We may be able to move away from the current rotation model to a fully customer driven inter-library loan approach or develop some other model which best meets our customers’ needs.
9. CONCLUSION

PLS’ role has significantly moved away from a “one size fits all”, one supplier model towards a consultative and responsive approach to the acquisition of Community Language materials.

Our system allows us to purchase materials that are valued and of high quality. No longer will libraries be limited to a ‘no choice’ bulk supply of materials. Feedback from the 8 specialist libraries has been overwhelmingly positive, with increased interest in participation from other libraries.

This customer centric approach ultimately benefits both libraries and more importantly the communities they serve.