

NEW HAVEN FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY: “FEWER COOKS IN THE KITCHEN”

“Baker & Taylor is willing to really work with a library to customize to what you need. They’ve been doing this a long time and really guided us through the process.”

– Kristin Mancini, *Technical Services Manager, New Haven Free Public Library*

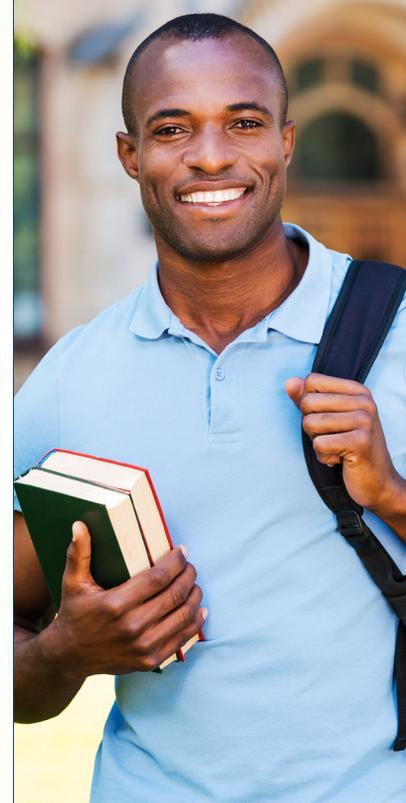
About New Haven Free Public Library

Founded in 1886, New Haven Free Public Library (NHFPL) serves an urban population of 130,000 that is notable for its cultural diversity and wide disparities in income and education level. With four branches and the Ives Main Library, NHFPL works within significant budget constraints to serve the public with books, electronic resources, internet access and programs for youth and adults.

THE CHALLENGE

Despite the presence of world-class Yale University, New Haven as a community faces many challenges, including unemployment and poverty rates of twice the national average. For NHFPL, these gritty realities hit home in the early 2000s with staff layoffs and the inability to backfill positions. “We no longer had the staff to catalog and process materials and get them on the shelf and circulating in a timely manner,” says Kristin Mancini, manager of technical services at NHFPL. “We had to find an alternative.”

NHFPL had tried outsourcing on a limited basis once before, purchasing shelf-ready books for an opening-day collection. That positive experience led the technical staff to recommend choosing a vendor as a cost-effective solution to the staffing crisis. Eventually, they proposed Baker & Taylor’s Custom Library Services (CLS) to the New Haven Board of Alders, which approved the selection.



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THE SOLUTION

The implementation process began with a document that contained all of NHFPL's specifications. This became a living document that still undergirds the library's relationship with the catalogers and processors at Baker & Taylor. "When we change something we're doing here, it goes into that document. I talk with CLS so that they have an understanding of how we need things to be done," Mancini explains.

As in any implementation, a critical step for NHFPL was to assign staff to spend time working with Baker & Taylor to share their expert knowledge of the library's needs and requirements. During the implementation period, three staff members handled the bulk of the interactions with Baker & Taylor. These included Mancini (the collections acquisition librarian at the time) and the cataloging staff. The IT staff also provided input, making sure the new catalog records loaded correctly. Within eight weeks, NHFPL was up and running with CLS, including full integration for ordering through Title Source. (The typical CLS implementation time is six to eight weeks.)

That was ten years ago. These days, some 75 percent of the collection for NHFPL comes from Baker & Taylor already cataloged and processed by CLS. "We did check every single item for a couple of months," Mancini laughs. "After a while, we stopped doing that. We still have ultimate control. We work very closely with CLS so that items are cataloged to our specifications. And as far as collection development, the workflow is much more efficient. We no longer have to manually review journals and make notes. There are fewer people involved—fewer cooks in the kitchen."

"We really love CLS for the turnaround time," says Mancini. "It's definitely a more efficient way for us to get books on the shelf quickly. It can go really fast. If we get a shipment one day, we can have it on the shelves the following day." With turnaround time a top priority for NHFPL, Baker & Taylor developed a custom report to help the library track the relationships between orders and shipments. "It helps us and B&T drill into what we are doing and grade ourselves. The goal is always to improve the turnaround time and get things on the shelves even faster. Baker & Taylor is always looking at options to make ordering more efficient and speed up shipping and delivery."

Bottom line: "It's working really well for us," Mancini says. "Whenever I contact Baker & Taylor, they are always responsive and helpful. They're willing to work with you on what you need."



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