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— Karen Thayer, administrator for technology and technical services, Tucson-Pima Public Library

BOOK SMART

Gateway® Profile all-in-one desktop PCs help bring the Tucson-Pima Public Library into the 21st century.

Community libraries strive to continuously improve the user experience, and the Tucson-Pima Public Library (TPPL) in Arizona is no different.

The library's 2004-2009 strategic direction includes encouraging lifelong learning, providing general information, supporting business and work force development, in addition to obtaining current topics and titles for its 24 branches.

Gateway Profile all-in-one desktops are helping to turn the library's goals into reality. TPPL has purchased Gateway Profile desktops since 2000 and uses them throughout the library system, said Karen Thayer, Administrator for Technology and Technical Services.

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

TPPL initially purchased 66 Profiles through an urban libraries grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

"The Gateway Profile PCs solved a lot of the issues we faced when trying to integrate technology in libraries, which weren't really built for computers," Thayer said. "We had to spend several years rewiring and installing local area networks, and we really didn't have a lot of furniture space or money to buy new furniture."

So the libraries used the existing countertops, which became cramped when a traditional desktop computer was in place.

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CUSTOMER PROFILE

AGENCY:

Tucson-Pima Public Library, Ariz.

MISSION:

Encourage lifelong learning, provide general information, support business and work force development, and obtain current topics and titles.

OBJECTIVE:

Continuously upgrade and add new desktop technology in the library's 24 branches to increase patron usability and staff functionality.

GATEWAY SOLUTION:

Since 2000, the Tucson-Pima Public Library has deployed Gateway Profile desktops in its 24 branches.

The library's 700 Profiles save space and deliver a wide range of services to patrons and staff.

ROI:

Since deploying the Gateway Profile PCs, TPPL has experienced a tremendous increase in the number of library card applications. Staff also credits the technology with making them more productive and better able to meet patron needs.

“The Gateway Profiles are very reliable — staff and customers have come to count on them.”

— **Karen Thayer**, administrator for technology and technical services, Tucson-Pima Public Library

“We were also very pleased that Gateway offered the best value and had the lowest bid, and we were able to buy the Profiles. Overall, they’ve definitely stood up, and I think that really is the bottom line.”

— **Karen Thayer**, administrator for technology and technical services, Tucson-Pima Public Library



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have to retrofit anything,” Thayer said. “And now, five years later, we’re still buying Profiles — we’ve got 700 of them.”

TPPL acquires Profiles every year, replacing all desktop PCs when they are four years old. “So every year, we’re purchasing the latest models for PC replacement,” Thayer said. The library system’s total number of PCs continues to grow when it adds new libraries or creates computer labs in existing facilities.

NOW AVAILABLE

In 1996 and 1997, TPPL had just four computers, which were used primarily for simple functions such as word processing. Over the years, the library has become increasingly sophisticated in its use of technology. For instance, TPPL migrated its catalog from a text-based Telnet session on dumb terminals to a Web-based catalog on the Internet.

“So things have progressed,” Thayer said. “We had to rewire libraries, increase the speed of Internet connections and provide more computers for public access. You know, the whole environment has changed. Customers rely on libraries to provide computers and access to the Internet and their e-mail.”

Library staff members also rely on technology like e-mail and Internet connectivity to do their jobs. “At all of the public service desks — check out, check in, information — all those functions that used to be done through a dumb terminal are now done on the Web, where staff members have a lot more information to help a customer.”

With the catalog available online, patrons can reserve their own books, check their patron record, renew their books and apply for a library card electronically, rather than talking to staff or filling out paper forms.

“We’ve added things that allow customers to interact with their own information and with the world out there,” Thayer said, adding that the general public can do just about everything on the library computers — e-mail, school papers, and research.

“We subscribe to about 20 databases online,” she said. “They provide access to 60,000 full-text magazine articles in English and Spanish, health information, English and Spanish encyclopedias, and testing guides, to name a few resources.

We also have computer labs where we offer Microsoft® Office programs — Word, Excel and PowerPoint, which are useful for students writing papers and residents involved in business endeavors.”

INCREASED USAGE

In 2004, Thayer said TPPL installed an automated system to manage public access to the library’s computer management system because the Profiles had become so popular that the paper tracking process couldn’t keep up.

“It took a lot of time for staff to manage the use of the computers,” she said. “We’ve had mad rushes to the computers when we open the door. We don’t have enough. Customers ask us to purchase more all the time. So every time we remodel a building or build a new building, we really try to get as many computers as we can.”

To help satisfy demand fairly TPPL installed a computerized self-sign-up program, which gives each user one hour of computer time per session. A library card is required to sign up for computer time, Thayer said. Since the system’s implementation nine months ago the number of library card applications has grown by about 30,000. Presently the library’s computers average 45,000 user sessions each month.

THUMBS UP

Gateway service and support allows TPPL to troubleshoot and quickly resolve problems. If a hard drive malfunctions, for example, Thayer simply requests a new part, and Gateway ships it — a much simpler solution than sending an entire computer back to the manufacturer.

In addition to Gateway’s customer service, Thayer said she’s impressed with the Profiles’ stability. “The Gateway Profiles are very reliable — staff and customers have come to count on them,” she said.

Indeed, the Profiles clearly outperform PCs from the library’s previous vendor.

“We don’t have as much trouble as we used to. The images and the color are much more vibrant,” Thayer said. “We were also very pleased that Gateway offered the best value and had the lowest bid, and we were able to buy the Profiles. Overall, they’ve definitely stood up, and I think that really is the bottom line.”