

Salt Lake City Library

An award winning new library was still using a very traditional method of tracking time & attendance information: a manual, paper-based system.

The Salt Lake City Library has won national awards for the modern design of its new main branch, which has become one of the top tourist destinations in the state, and the center of an emerging city center block. It is also recognized as a visionary for its community-centered programming.

And while the architecture and offerings of the library are models of vision and imagination, until mid-2008, the capital city's library and its 300+ employees were using a very traditional method of entering their time and attendance information: a manual, paper-based system.

Predictably, processing over 300 timesheets by hand and reconciling hours, vacation, sick time and other information twice a month, was very time consuming—as well as error-prone. Benefits Librarian Rene Vallieres estimates the process took at least eight hours of staff time every pay period.

The library system had already automated its HR function with a software vendor, and its payroll with Qquest Payroll Services, and thus understood the benefits of managing complex employee management issues with software solutions. In early 2008, the benefits department was ready to make the change to an automated time and attendance system as well.

As a government entity, the vendor search process was very thorough. The benefits team looked at several options, including a time and attendance module sold by their human resources vendor, as well as Qquest's time and attendance product, TimeForce.

The benefits team was looking to dramatically improve accuracy and decrease time—particularly time spent tracking and reporting vacation and sick time. They also wanted a simple user interface for employees, reporting capabilities, and the ability to integrate with their existing payroll system.

The decision-making group narrowed the field down to two options: Qquest and another vendor. Both solutions were similar in the features area, and both integrated with payroll. However, when it came to cost, Qquest's TimeForce won hands down. "By choosing Qquest, we got exactly what we needed in functionality, but at a price of literally thousands of dollars less than the other option," said Vallieres.

Once the benefits group selected TimeForce, they got to work quickly on implementation, which only took a few months. Vallieres, who has a background in IT and is a software implementation specialist, described the process: "This was the easiest implementation of a complex system I've ever experienced. It was a nice surprise. Qquest laid out the scope of the project clearly. There were no grey areas. We all knew who was responsible for what, and got the job done quickly and well."

The team's goal was to get the new time and attendance system up and running by July 1, the first day of the new fiscal year. To give themselves, as well as other employees, time to get acquainted with the automated system and work through any potential bugs, they ran both TimeForce and the paper-based process concurrently for two pay periods.

By doing this, Vallieres had the opportunity to identify employee questions. Throughout the month, he visited different branches and departments to conduct supervisor and user training sessions. At first, some employees were wary of the change. However, once they used TimeForce a few times, their concerns disappeared.

The library selected TimeForce's web-hosted model so employees could easily access the system from any computer, whether at the main building or at any of the branches. They simply enter their user name and password, and then clock in. They clock out the same way.

The benefits department takes the information generated by TimeForce and exports it to Millennium 3, the payroll system through Qquest Payroll Services. "The process is very intuitive. We've been using it for several months now and haven't had a problem yet," said Vallieres.

The Salt Lake City Library System is already seeing the benefits of automating the time-to-payroll process. "We've cut the staff time spent on collecting and reconciling our time and attendance data drastically, and increased accuracy at the same time," Vallieres said.

The most significant benefit, according to Vallieres, is having the ability to accurately track and report personal time off. With the old system, employees entered their time manually, then benefits department staff manually entered the information into the HR software, leaving lots of room for human error.

"We were constantly dealing with discrepancies between the hours employees thought they had earned, and what was logged in our system," said Vallieres. "My staff would have to go back through all 26 timesheets whenever a question arose, and over the year, this happened with just about every employee."

And while this made for a very inefficient process, the human toll was even more discouraging. "Most of the time, employees had no idea how much time they had accrued. Some had earned less than they had expected, and some had actually compiled a lot more. Many employees would wait until the last few months of our fiscal year to get a final count. And because we don't carry over most hours from year to year, when they discovered they had more personal time off hours than expected, they would quickly plan a vacation. June in our libraries was a ghost town. With TimeForce, they always know exactly where they stand."

The Salt Lake City Public Library's technology is now on par with its architecture and vision. And in the next year, they expect to begin using more of the software's reporting capabilities, and even add Qquest's scheduling module.

"We're happy," said Vallieres. "Everything is working well, and with an end-to-end solution for both time and attendance and payroll, we're much more efficient. Qquest has us covered."