

Mackay Regional Council Libraries & Montage

Mackay, Queensland, Australia

Mackay Regional Council Libraries serve a diverse community across five branches and two mobile libraries, supporting everyone from mine workers to families and students. With over 50 staff, the team is focused on delivering modern, customer-centred services. Softlink IC ¹, has allowed Mackay Libraries to evolve with changing expectations, enhancing efficiency, empowering staff, and strengthening engagement.

Tell us about your library:

Mackay is located on the Central Queensland coast in a lush sub-tropical region famous for the production of sugar cane. The blue Pioneer River flows through the district and ultimately joins the golden beaches and tropical waters of the Great Barrier Reef.

As a major support centre for the coal industry in the Bowen basin there is the hustle and bustle of industry as sugar and coal are exported to the world. A vibrant tourism industry includes attractions like seeing platypus in tropical rainforest, mountain bike trails, aquatic activities within the reef and much more.

At a glance:

Chosen solution: Montage

Key objectives: Deliver modern, customer-focused services, support mobile teams, streamline workflows, enhance engagement, improve access, and future-proof library operations across branches and mobile libraries.

Flexible Options: Empowering branch and mobile staff to manage content updates directly, reduce web admin bottlenecks, and keep public-facing information timely and relevant.

Core Challenges: Balancing digital expectations, staff efficiency, and community engagement while reducing update delays and maintaining relevance across diverse library branches and platforms.

Library staff: 50+ staff members



¹ Softlink Information Centres acquired AIT in 2024, uniting Aurora's Australian-built technology with Softlink's global expertise.

With such a diverse industry base we see a broad demographics of people within our library service. All the way from those completing site inductions for mines to people loaning bird watching kits. We have five branches and two mobile libraries in our region employing over 50 staff members.

What are Mackay Regional Council Library's goals and mission?

Connecting system development with real-world library need such as boosting efficiency, sharing resources across councils, and making better use of software, hardware, and collections.

Mackay Regional Library's Vision

An everchanging library that fosters connection and discovery.

Mackay Regional Library's Purpose

Through strategic partnerships, we aim to curate a diverse library service that empowers our community. Our dedicated team is committed to creating a welcoming environment where knowledge thrives and all individuals can explore, learn and grow together.

We constantly seek out systems and improvements that free our staff to provide the very best community interactions. All of this to provide a common sense of well-being and connection to community.

What kind of challenges were you facing that made you think about a new LMS?

For many years now, Aurora has been the LMS of choice for Mackay Regional Council. As we have evolved for the ever-changing technology landscape so has the Aurora product. Previous examples of major improvements include:

- a) Vendor managed web-based infrastructure with Aurora Cloud Desktop - This upgrade significantly sped up the process of delivering software updates. Astria is the next evolution to make this even quicker.
- b) Floating stock and automatic stock rotation - This was a fantastic cost saving initiative resulting in our popular titles automatically rotating around our branches via the daily courier. Providing equity of access to the good reads irrespective of branch size. Keeping collections fresh and dynamic, making the best use of our collections spend.

Montage has seen major leaps forward in our capabilities and improving customer interactions.

What was your turning point, and how were you feeling?

AIT and Softlink have always been an excellent sounding board for our concerns and challenges. With our monthly meetings we feel well at ease to discuss our current adventures in the world of libraries. It is with great regularity that potential solutions and work arounds are proposed by Softlink.

The agreed solution is often included in the next software update. It can be a significant burden on our library crew when the LMS is unable cater for a changing requirement, hence having a vendor that is able to quickly respond and adapt is a true asset. The staff very much see Aurora as a constant stream of continuous improvement rather than large step changes.

Our main turning point was the realisation that a list of functionalities from a LMS vendor is no longer enough, the relationship must include the ability to adapt and cater for new challenges throughout the relationship.

What was at stake if you didn't make a change?

To grow the customer base in libraries, continues to be a challenge. How the different generations interact with technology provide the greatest difficulties with the LMS being able to resonate with individuals. The stakes are high if we fail to provide the library that the customer wants to see. We need our customers to return to the library on a regular basis.

The goal of remaining relevant for the community is in the quality of interactions. With these interactions quite often being on a digital or web-based platform. Similarly, any tools that assist first contact resolution of a customer query greatly enhances our opportunity for ongoing engagement.

Why did you choose Montage to solve your challenge(s)?

We chose to be involved in the Montage upgrade as it provided a real opportunity to have our OPAC and web interface refine for greater ease of use and relevance. More importantly the administration web site of Montage allowed MRC staff members outside of the Systems Team to maintain and update the website.

Staff are able to update content in their areas of interest. The ability to have user level permissions to edit the various parts of Montage gives piece of mind to all that the various teams are only able edit items that are applicable to them.

How are you using Montage to solve your challenge(s)? How are you finding the process?

With so many staff now being able to edit Montage and keep the content fresh and dynamic this provides greater opportunity to maintain engagement with our customers. The user interface on the Montage administrative website is intuitive and easy to use. Those with little web development experience are quickly able to attain the outcomes desired.

How have you benefited from using Montage? Do you have any statistics you can share with us? Do you have qualitative results to share with us?

Montage content is being refreshed much more regularly. When the library requires to pivot to quickly respond to events, Montage can follow our response.

We even have the Council's Corporate Communications Team making direct edits to the Montage site. The time to live for new content is now much reduced.

Is Montage helping you achieve your goals? Have you set new goals and targets?

The double handling of web site change requests has greatly diminished. Previously those who needed the change done would place a request with the Systems

Team and then wait for the change to be made, confirmed to be true and correct and then published. Now the originator of the request is quite often able make, approve and release the change themselves.

We currently have difficulties directing customers to the best digital provider of the content they are looking for. A new goal we have set is to have a digital platform aggregation tool where customers can implicitly search for title and be direct to either the physical or digital copies available.

The trick being to have an easy off load point to go to the best digital platform to serve the loan. A combination of where the digital title is available, which platforms the customer has signed up for and easy sign up for platforms that may be required for the current transaction.

What have you learned from working with Softlink IC?

When we articulate business requirements to Softlink there is always keen ear for detail and understanding. Quite often our discussions will result in whole modules being developed in future software releases. Just within the context of Montage we have features like the dead link checker, the edit audit logs and security levels being examples of Softlink being highly responsive to our business requirements.

What would you say to other libraries facing the same challenge(s)?

Don't get caught up in focusing on what can't be done but think about how things could be done better. Communicate your challenges, dream of a better way, put forth your suggestions, add a healthy portion of collaboration and be rewarded with a solution.

With Montage, Mackay Libraries have reduced bottlenecks, kept content fresher, and improved customer interactions. Staff now manage updates directly, ensuring timely and relevant information for their community. Backed by Softlink IC's responsive partnership, the service continues to innovate - working toward unified discovery and ensuring long-term impact.