



2007  
COUNTY BEST  
PRACTICE AWARD  
TEXAS ASSOCIATION  
OF COUNTIES  
LEADERSHIP  
FOUNDATION

HARRIS COUNTY  
LIBRARY COLLECTION  
PROGRAM

BY  
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# The Challenge

- 2004 collaboration between the Harris County Public Library and the Harris County Attorney's Office.
- Effectively enforce returns of books and other items.
- Place items back in circulation.
- Collect fees and fines.

# Challenge Cont'd

- Library originally sent four letters.
- Patrons ignored 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> letters.
- Library's concern was loss of property.
- Loss included books, music CDs, movie DVD's and laptop computers.
- The lost revenue of the unreturned items per year is between \$300,000.00 and \$900,000.00 (based on the data for 2004 – 2006).

# The Solution

- Library revised notice to patrons.
- Library reduced number of letters from four (4) to two (2).
- If no response after the 2<sup>nd</sup> letter, data forwarded to Harris County Attorney's Office.
- County Attorney's case management system generated collection letter.

# Solution Cont'd

- The County Attorney's objective:
- Friendly but persuasive letter.
- County Attorney letterhead.
- Enhanced aura of authority and enforcement in 3<sup>rd</sup> letter.
- Return items and pay fees and fines directly to library branches.

# The Results

- Enforcement began early 2005.
- Enabled libraries to recover items and fines at the branch level.
- Eliminated cost of 4<sup>th</sup> letter.
- Letterhead provided additional enforcement.

# Results Cont'd

- Two year period 2005-2006.
- \$526,903.69 value of property recovered by the libraries.
- Approximately 20,000 books returned.
- Dollar amount does not include fees and fines collected from library patrons.

# Summary

- The “Library Collection Program” continues to recover items and fees and fines for the Harris County Libraries.
- The collection method also reduced postage expense for the Harris County Libraries.
- Items placed back in circulation continue to be available to the borrowing public.

# The End



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