

# Bibliocommons is live at the New Westminster Public Library

By Shelley Wilson-Roberts.

Imagine this: After browsing the library catalogue I saw that someone had uploaded a short video about Andrea Levy's "The Long Song", watched it and thought that I'd love to read the book, so I placed a hold in two clicks. Then I checked "My NWPL" to see what holds I had coming up, looked at my recommendations to see if any of the other catalogue users I follow had recommended anything good. They had – excellent – so I added two of the recommended titles to my "For Later List", and starred the novel I had just returned and really liked.

## Bibliocommons @ NWPL

The above interaction is a typical one with our new Bibliocommons catalogue: <http://newwestminster.bibliocommons.com>. Not only can users search and place holds for items in the library collection, but they can interact with library staff, library collections, and people they've never met.

Since going live on October 5, 2010, we have had over 1800 registrants doing just that, and in less than an hour of being live, we had our first contribution from the public. It certainly has been exciting being the first library in British Columbia to go live with Bibliocommons. There will certainly be a period of adjustment for library staff and the public as we explore our new system together, but people are already pretty excited about the new interface and eager to test out the new Web 2.0 style features, like commenting, rating, and list-making. Of course, users are free to browse the catalogue, check their account, renew items, and place holds, all without using the social networking features.

New features should please a wide variety of library catalogue users: smart keyword searching and excellent faceting options, with the added bonus of improved list functions, easier hold placement, and social networking enhancements for those who want them. The smart search function also interprets spelling errors with a "did you mean" response – useful for staff and patrons alike. Relevancy searching aggregates search data from all

Bibliocommons libraries to give the most recently searched-for items top billing in the search result list: try searching for Kathryn Stockett's *The Help*.

## Publicity

We publicized the catalogue upgrade on a local blog ([www.tenthtothefraser.ca](http://www.tenthtothefraser.ca)) as well as in the local papers, and got immediate response from the blog post, including one library user who said Bibliocommons would be his crack cocaine. Library staff have certainly enjoyed creating lists and adding items to their collections, and it's been very rewarding to see what everyone is reading (even if we don't know who all the staff members are thanks to some very clever usernames). The Bibliocommons format makes it much easier for staff to make themed reading lists and staff picks lists straight in the catalogue. Library users can then place holds on items that interest them directly from the list, rather than having to go from a print publication to the catalogue, or from another part of the library website to the library catalogue.

## Staff Training

As for staff training, we had the librarians work through a set of 12 self-directed exercises developed by Bibliocommons that helped everyone become familiar with the various features in the new catalogue. Librarians were encouraged to make lists and write reviews, and most of us found once we started, it was hard to stop. We had librarians and library assistants work as Ambassadors for the first two weeks of being live to field questions at our OPACs on the main floor of the library. We knew there would be an adjustment period for patrons who came to log into their account for the first time, so having the ambassadors as extra staff during busy times helped ease the pressure off the Inquiry desk.

## Getting to Know the Library ... Again!

We're developing the best ways for us to promote the library's collections through staff picks lists and subject-based lists. The more we play with

Bibliocommons, the more ideas we'll have to promote our collection, and be surprised by what our library users have to say about what they read, watch, and listen to from the library. This two-way street for communicating about library collections is a valuable way for us to supplement our knowledge of the community that uses our library. There may be other creases to iron out as we progress but we're

confident that Bibliocommons will help the public – and library staff—get to know the New Westminster Public Library's collection all over again.

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