

Public Library Empowers Communities with Online Tools

Northern Territory Library uses Cisco WebEx technology to teach remote indigenous populations Web 2.0 skills.

Summary

Customer Name:

Northern Territory Library

Industry:

Public Sector

Location:

Darwin, Northern Territory,
Australia

Number of Employees:

80

Challenge:

- Extend public library services to remote Northern Territory locations
- Teach indigenous communities Internet skills in virtual environment
- Deliver public storybook reading to multiple library locations simultaneously

Solution:

- Implemented WebEx technology to facilitate online training and reading programs
- Interactive tools help engage remote learners while demonstrating the full extent of Web 2.0 capabilities
- Real-time feedback allows synchronous broadcasting to various library locations

Results:

- Delivered successful storybook reading to children across Northern Territory
- Improved Web 2.0 training sessions, allowing more indigenous populations to utilize Internet resources
- Streamlined online grant proposal process, creating new funding opportunities for public libraries

Challenge

As one of the major research and reference facilities in Australia's Northern Territory, Northern Territory Library (NTL) provides a centralized model for all public libraries across the region. Out of the 33 public libraries in the Territory, 22 are situated in remote indigenous communities. The Libraries and Knowledge Centres (LKC) Program was developed to provide these remote populations access to library resources online.

Many people in these communities, however, do not have the access nor the skills to take advantage of NTL's Internet-based services. That's why the Commonwealth of Australia, States, and the Northern Territory are working together with targeted communities to improve indigenous Australians' access to the Internet and provide the basic skills required to use online resources, particularly in the areas of financial management, education, health, and communication, as well as employment and business opportunities.

Although in-person training would have been an ideal way of doing this, it is costly and difficult to travel to these remote locations where there is often only one flight available per day. To effectively teach these Web 2.0 skills remotely, NTL needed a virtual meeting tool that would allow real-time sharing of documents, presentations, videos, and other online tools.

NTL also helps libraries across the country improve literacy by exposing children to reading programs. The National Simultaneous Storytime is one such initiative, in which children all over Australia gather in various venues to listen to the same book being read at the same time. This year, organizers wanted to use a web-conferencing solution for the event, so that children from different schools could participate together and share the experience.

Solution

With rich collaboration tools and a user-friendly interface, Cisco WebEx™ technology stood out as the perfect medium for delivering NTL's training and education programs. It is now being used as part of the library's e-learning program to teach remote community members basic Internet and computer skills. "Cisco WebEx conferencing is the perfect collaboration solution for this type of training," says Nicholas Kirlaw, NTL's manager of library technology. "With features like white boarding, desktop sharing, recording and video, we can easily demonstrate Web 2.0 tools, such as blogging and Wikipedia, while engaging participants with interactive lessons."

Cisco WebEx® online solutions also offered an effective way to bring multiple library locations in sync for the National Simultaneous Storytime event. "After experiencing the benefits of WebEx technology to stay in touch and communicate efficiently across the Territory, we decided to extend the use of the technology for this annual event," says Kirlaw. Communities across the Territory were invited to participate in a public reading of "Little White Dogs Can't Jump" by Australian authors Bruce Whatley and Rosie Smith.

“WebEx technology is an integral part of our education and training programs. It has helped bring technology skills to the indigenous communities and enabled libraries to promote literacy throughout Australia.”

— Nicholas Kirlaw, manager of library technology, Northern Territory Library

Results

Thanks to Cisco® WebEx technology, the National Simultaneous Storytime event was a huge success, with many children participating from local libraries throughout Australia. Each participating venue set up a large projection screen, so that students in urban and regional libraries could see and hear each other in real time. For many children, this public reading was the first time they had the opportunity to sit in on a two-way web conference.

Children in eight remote locations, ranging from Lajamanu, Wadeye to Mataranka, listened to ABC Sports Commentator Charlie King read “Little White Dogs Can’t Jump” live from the Northern Territory Library, Parliament House. The Minister for Arts & Museums, Gerry McCarthy, also read at Tennant Creek Library as part of the national event.

Web conferencing has proven to be a cost-effective way of delivering the library’s remote training programs as well. “WebEx technology has been a key resource for NTL to improve the quality of education, literacy and economic activity within the indigenous communities,” says Kirlaw. “Now that we have a reliable web-conferencing tool, we no longer need to travel to provide Web 2.0 training sessions.”

In addition to enhancing its training and public reading programs, NTL has streamlined the grant proposal process for securing new funds for libraries. Using WebEx collaboration tools to conduct review sessions and discussions online, the library is able to work together more efficiently between a diverse set of stakeholders. As a result, more libraries are applying for grants and finding new funding opportunities.

Most importantly, however, the online solution has allowed NTL to enhance its service to the public. “WebEx technology is an integral part of our education and training programs,” says Kirlaw. “It has helped bring technology skills to the indigenous communities and enabled libraries to promote literacy throughout Australia.”

For More Information

- To find out more about Cisco WebEx, go to: <http://www.cisco.com/go/webex>.
- To read other success stories, go to: <http://www.cisco.com/go/webexcasestudies>.
- To provide feedback or participate in the WebEx customer reference program, email: real.results@webex.com.
- To watch a movie of the National Simultaneous Storytime event, go to http://www.ntl.nt.gov.au/for_me/web_tv

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