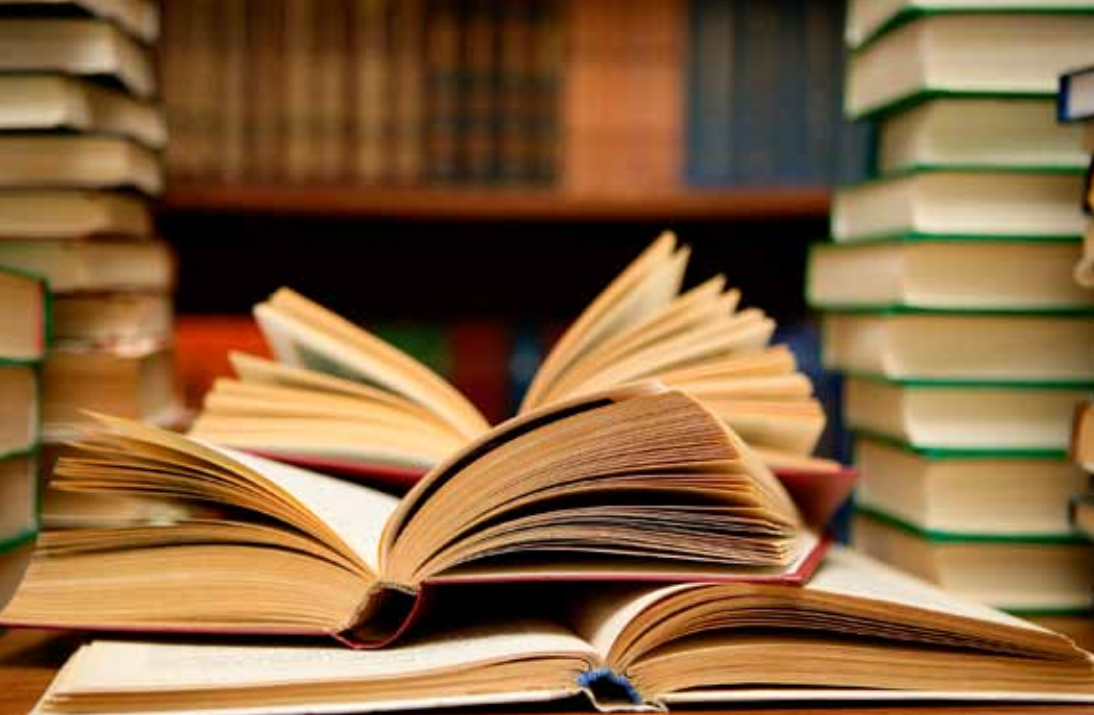




# Brooklyn Public Library

## Case Study



**“With UPS, we improved service and increased speed without raising costs.”**

— John Vitali,  
Chief Financial Officer of BPL

Brooklyn Public Library (BPL) is the fifth largest library system in the United States. It connects a network of 60 libraries that provide books, magazines, CDs, DVDs, digital resources, computer access and free educational assistance to the 2.5 million residents of Brooklyn.

### Challenge

The library’s inventory is in constant motion. Materials move from branch to branch due to several factors: (1) library customers return material to a different branch from which they picked it up, (2) specific material may not be available in

a branch, so a customer requests a transfer, (3) specialized collections are shared between branches.

With more than 16 million checkouts and renewals each year, BPL processes 3,000 shipments a day. The library requires a streamlined system for moving items between libraries and getting them in customers’ hands quickly.

Previously, BPL operated its own fleet of six vehicles and drivers, which moved books and materials within the Brooklyn network. Every day, the vehicles would drop off and pick up at each of the 60 locations, and then route materials through the central distribution center.

However, because of the system’s

enormous volume and minimal fleet, deliveries were often delayed or lost. The distribution center had a seven-day backlog, so customers frequently had to wait a week to pick up a book after they reserved it. Misplaced shipments disappeared, with no way to see where they got lost in the system. Because of the backlog, it took many days to discover there was even a problem.

“Our system was complicated and understaffed,” recalls John Vitali, Chief Financial Officer of BPL. “We knew that we needed to make a serious investment to improve our fleet, but we also knew that we didn’t want to be in the delivery business.”

The library's distribution system had reached full capacity. While customer demand increased, the library had no room to grow. BPL needed to purchase more infrastructure and replace its aging fleet, or find another solution.

## Solution

In May 2008, BPL brought in UPS to manage its distribution process.

First, UPS equipped every library with technology solutions that prepare, track and bill shipments.

UPS CampusShip® enables each branch to prepare shipments in just a few mouse clicks. The tool allocates costs by branch automatically, so the final bill provides a comprehensive report that can break down shipping information by branch.

The tool also can restrict a user's shipping access. For instance, some shippers may only need to ship via UPS Ground service, or to a few addresses within the library system. Access controls ensure that BPL does not incur extra costs from packages prepared inappropriately.

Quantum View® allows the library to track every shipment. Previously, each branch had no way of knowing when new inventory would arrive, making it difficult to plan staff for sorting new materials or inform customers of a book's status. Now, each location has visibility into every shipment, including when and how many materials will arrive. This helps branches to schedule staff and keep customers informed.

"At first, the staff was nervous about learning a whole new system," says

Vitali. "But we were amazed by how easy it was. UPS provided training, and soon everyone was on board. The training helped create a smooth transition."

UPS also implemented UPS Billing Data and Billing Analysis Tool, which enable BPL to manage its bills and run detailed reports. This ensures that bills are processed smoothly.

Vitali says that this technology is exactly what BPL needed.

"It takes out all the guess work," says Vitali. "The process has gotten much more scientific and data-driven. Now we can focus on our core business, which is getting books in the hands of our customers."

In addition to technology solutions, UPS Customer Solutions provided professional logistics advice. UPS evaluated the BPL shipping area, which was previously a two-truck parking garage, and recommended changes that would maximize the space. According to Vitali, the advice was "spot on."

## Results

After switching to UPS, BPL reduced its order backlog from seven days to none. Now shipments arrive the very next day, and customers don't have to wait a week or more to receive their reserved items. BPL also doubled the number of daily pick ups at each site.

"This is one of those things where we say to ourselves, 'we should have done this years ago,'" says Vitali. "With UPS, we improved service and increased speed without raising costs. Plus, we've really improved reliability.

Lost items used to be a major issue, and now they're incredibly minimal."

What's more, the new system allowed BPL to avoid expanding its fleet to keep up with rising demand. BPL estimates that an expansion would have increased transportation costs by more than 70 percent. And there was no guarantee that the enlarged fleet would keep pace with the increasing circulation. Every few years, BPL would have required another expansion.

By teaming up with UPS, BPL eliminated the need to grow its fleet and reduced financial risk. Variable overhead costs like vehicle maintenance, gas, insurance and other expenses of maintaining a fleet, are no longer a concern.

BPL was even able to increase the number of books a customer can reserve, providing better service.

"The transition was so smooth, it was virtually invisible to customers," says Vitali. "All they knew was that they were getting better service and receiving their books much sooner."

The BPL and UPS relationship continues to grow. BPL aspires to offer customers a home delivery service, and the ability to return books to any The UPS Store® location.

"It's nice to have the chance to start thinking about these things now," says Vitali. "We stopped worrying about how the books were moving, so now we can get more creative with our business."

