Opening a new chapter in financial management

Oklahoma County library system replaces outdated tools with real-time insights and control

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John Rahhal
Controller, Metropolitan Library Commission of Oklahoma County

The challenge
With outdated, manual systems—including some still running on DOS—the finance team at the Metropolitan Library Commission struggled to meet the demands of a modern, multi-branch system.

The solution
The library partnered with Sage Intacct to modernize its entire financial infrastructure. Moving to the cloud unlocked automated workflows, centralized data, and real-time reporting. Budget managers gained secure access to dashboards tailored to their branch, while the finance team has new, flexible reporting tools to deliver timely, actionable insights across the organization.

Results with Sage Intacct
Sage Intacct has transformed financial operations at the library, saving time, improving accuracy, and empowering teams to do more for the community.

- Eliminated the need for one full-time position through efficiency gains.
- Saving more than 1,000 hours annually through streamlined reporting, approvals, and purchasing.
- Real-time dashboards replace static spreadsheets, improving visibility for 35+ managers.
- Faster, cleaner audits with well-documented data.
- A paperless process for requisitions and purchasing improves efficiency and accessibility.

Organization
Metropolitan Library Commission of Oklahoma County

Location
Oklahoma, US

Industry
Government Commission

Sage Products
Sage Intacct

About Metropolitan Library Commission
The Metropolitan Library Commission of Oklahoma County serves more than 800,000 residents through 19 branches. Its mission is to inspire learning, promote literacy, and strengthen community by providing free access to books, programs, and technology.

About Baker Tilly
Baker Tilly is a leading advisory CPA firm that helps organizations modernize operations, improve financial visibility, and drive growth by leveraging their deep industry expertise and practical solutions.

Sage

Turning the page on outdated technology

The Metropolitan Library Commission of Oklahoma County has always been a little different. Formed under a unique Oklahoma statute in 1965, the government entity oversees a network of 19 libraries across the state's most populous county. It operates independently from city or county governments and answers to a 27-member Commission — but like libraries everywhere, its mission is simple: to inform, empower, and connect communities.

With an annual budget of $60 million and 450 employees, this is no small-town system. However, until 2016, its financial infrastructure still relied on an aging, homegrown platform— one so outdated that parts of it displayed only in DOS-era green text.

"When I got here, I thought, 'We can't keep doing this,'" recalls Controller John Rahhal. "The system had been patched together over 40 years. It wasn't really even an accounting system. If you wanted a report, you went to IT and hoped for the best."

That all changed when the Library selected Sage Intacct, guided through the process by a team from Baker Tilly and won over by the power of the platform and the people behind it. "Sage Intacct just felt like the right fit from the demos," John says. "And the team we met with gave us confidence they'd be there when we needed them."

Writing a better financial story

The move to Sage Intacct marked a major leap forward. "It was a godsend," says John. "We went from canned, inflexible reports to real-time, drillable dashboards. We can now create the views our team and our Commission actually need—and change the look and feel on the fly."

It also allowed the finance team to simplify and streamline operations. The department operates with just six FTEs today, down from 7.5 before Sage Intacct—despite the added complexity of a second entity created to manage the Library's self-funded insurance plan.

"We were tracking all that in spreadsheets before," John says. "Now it's in Sage Intacct, clean and reportable, and only accessible to the handful of people who need it."

The finance team uses custom dimensions for fund type, location, and budget year—ensuring every dollar can be traced to its purpose. "We're a fund-oriented organization," John explains. "We have our general fund, but also dozens of small special funds. Sage Intacct gives us the structure we need without creating complexity."

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By moving to Sage Intacct, the Metropolitan Library Commission saves more than 100 hours each month on reporting, procurement, and approvals.

Time savings across the county

The Library's reach may be broad, but Sage Intacct helps make it feel connected. With 80 to 90 employee users — most of whom are stationed in branches across the county — purchasing is now fully electronic. Paper purchase requests are a thing of the past.

"Each user enters their request, it routes automatically to their manager for approval, and then to our office to place the order," John says. "It's consistent, streamlined, and fast."

Managers also have real-time budget-to-actual dashboards showing month-to-date and year-to-date figures, along with their remaining budget and percentage used. "It empowers them to spot errors and plan better," John says. "We've created special dashboards for IT, marketing, and facilities that let them monitor their specific accounts across all 19 locations. They're not waiting for finance to hand them answers."

This downstream visibility has transformed how teams work. "Before, if you wanted to know where you were budget-wise, you might get a report once a month—if you asked for it," says John. "Now, it's at their fingertips. They can even drill into accounts payable to find details about past purchases."

Automating, learning, and saving

The Library has recently begun rolling out AP Automation with Sage Intacct, and the early impact is substantial.

Every year, the system spends millions on books — more than 15% of its budget — and those orders flow through a separate integrated library system (ILS). Previously, staff uploaded invoices manually, and the team spent hours attaching each file individually.

"Now, we scan them and drop them into a folder," says John. "Sage Intacct reads them, creates the bill, and learns over time. That process alone is saving us 1,000 hours a year—and that's just the beginning."

They've started using the same drag-and-drop approach for utility bills and hope to expand to more vendors over time. "Eventually we'll get to the point where the invoices come straight to the system," John says.

Streamlined audits and strong oversight

As a public organization, the Library is subject to annual audits — a process that used to involve long site visits and hours of prep. "Now we just give the auditors a login and say, 'Go to town,'" says John. "They can pull their own samples and see the attached documentation themselves. It's saved us a ton of time, and it helped us hold audit fees flat during negotiations."

The platform also supports long-term planning. With reliable data at their fingertips, John and the CFO can respond promptly to board and staff requests. "We're not chasing data. We're able to think ahead and provide tools that make everyone's job easier."

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John Rahhal
Controller, Metropolitan Library Commission

From overdue to proactive

Today, the Metropolitan Library Commission isn't just running more efficiently—it's operating with greater insight, trust, and collaboration.

"We've gone from being reactive to being proactive," John says. "We're doing things we never had time to do before, like creating dashboards and training users. We can anticipate what people need and give it to them before they ask."

For a team responsible for stewarding public resources and supporting beloved community institutions, that shift means everything. "The time savings are fabulous, of course, John concludes, "but what really matters is doing our jobs better, helping others do theirs, and advancing the mission we all believe in."

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