

Amsterdam Libraries Deploying RFID

Twenty-five branches of the city's public library are being outfitted with a system to expedite the tracking and borrowing of books.

By Jonathan Collins

Oct. 14, 2005—Twenty-five branches of the [Amsterdam Public Library](#) are on their way to deploying RFID to help manage their collections.

The library system's ongoing deployment began a year ago and is due to be completed by the end of 2005. Approximately 15 branches have already been outfitted with RFID readers (interrogators), allowing staff to track inventory more easily and enabling staff and patrons to check books in and out more quickly. The project was announced by French RFID equipment maker [Tagsys](#) at the [RFID Journal LIVE! Europe](#) conference, held this week in Amsterdam.

The deployment is the first phase of the library's RFID rollout. The plans for the second phase include extending the system to Amsterdam's central library and its collections. "We expect the central library to go live with RFID in 2007," says Pierre Matignon, head of the European library division at Tagsys, which is supplying the interrogators and security gates for the entire project.

By the end of this year, patrons at each library branch will be able to use RFID-enabled machines to check out books without staff assistance. The machines can be used to scan existing bar codes on patrons' membership cards and link those details, and the due dates of books being out, with the book's RFID tags.

The deployment requires an average of 75,000 books to be tagged at each library. For the past year, [NBDIBiblion](#) has been tagging all of the approximately 2.7 million books it sells annually to Dutch libraries (see [Publisher Tags All Library Books](#)). But the publisher is also selling the same tags to the Amsterdam branches to be retrofitted for their existing collections.

The adhesive-backed smart labels measure 54 millimeters by 86 millimeters and contain [Philips Semiconductors'](#) 13.56 MHz I-code SLI chip. The labels, which comply with the ISO 15693 standard, are being supplied equally by two companies: [UPM Rafsec](#) and [Smartag](#).

The new systems are being deployed by [Autocheck Systems BV](#), a specialist in library security and self-service checkout systems. By the end of the project, each library branch will be equipped with three Tagsys L100 readers, each with a single antenna. Two of the interrogators will be used by the library staff to check books in and out, while the third will be used by patrons. In addition, each library will have one Tagsys LHR mobile RFID reader available for staff members to track inventory. With the mobile reader, a library worker can automatically take full inventory of the collection by passing the interrogator across books sitting on the shelves. Three Tagsys LSB2 security gates will also be deployed at the exits of each branch, to read the book tags and ensure that the books have been checked out correctly before being removed from the building.

Traditionally, libraries have relied on employees to manually scan each item undergoing the book-handling

process. Now, however, checkout machines can access the library's software management system (LMS) to record the transaction and change a digit on the book's RFID tag. Because the security gates are not linked to the LMS, the signal to open the gates is driven by the digit in the tag's checked-out field.

According to Tagsys, the Amsterdam library deployment has been well received by library staff and patrons alike. "All the feedback has been positive," Matignon says, noting, "It is very encouraging for RFID in the Netherlands."

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