

# Bookstore RFID-enables Its Operations

One of Holland's largest booksellers has integrated RFID into the operations of its brand-new store.

By Jonathan Collins

Apr. 18, 2006—For its newest store, Dutch bookseller Boekhandels Groep Nederland (BGN) is tagging all its books and deploying its first in-store RFID system.

The new Selexyz-branded store, set to open Apr. 19 in the city of Almere, has been equipped with a tunnel RFID interrogator (reader) at the delivery door, interrogators at the point-of-sale (POS) terminals and another reader mounted on a trolley to take inventory in the store twice a day.

BGN bookstores receive around 98 percent of the books it sells from Dutch book distributor Central Bookhaus, which is tagging its deliveries to the new store. A self-adhesive RFID label, based on the EPC Gen 2 standard, is placed inside each book as well as on the box in which the book is shipped. A box holds between 80 and 100 books. BGN is paying for the tags, but Central Bookhaus is not charging a fee to tag the books because the distributor sees the potential for RFID tags to help it improve its own business.

When a shipment leaves Central Bookhaus, the distributor electronically sends BGN an advance shipping notice with the unique numbers of the box and book RFID tags. On arrival at the store, the reads from the tags automatically identify which books have arrived.

As BGN was preparing to open its new store, the ability to automatically account for almost every book delivered there proved valuable.

"The store took delivery of 45,000 books in just three days," says Matthijs van der Lely, president director and CEO at BGN. "That's hugely faster than we could have done without RFID. It would have been two weeks' work."

Once the store opens for business, deliveries will decrease to about 1,000 books a day, but the RFID tags inside each book will be used inside the store. Eventually BGN hopes to use bookshelves with RFID interrogators to determine what inventory is in the store as well as the location of each book. However, initially a reader mounted on a trolley will be pushed down the store aisles to help automate inventory reconciliation and update the books' locations.

"We will deploy shelf readers just as soon as the technology is ready," says van der Lely.

Information from the automated inventory will be made available to staff and customers. Four kiosks on the selling floor will let customers search for particular books and have the location in the store displayed on screen. Staff will have access to the same information from their workstations.

BGN is looking to RFID to help increase efficiency in goods receiving as well as provide a more accurate account of the store's inventory, but it also believes the technology will help boost customer service. Data

from RFID could be used to trigger automated e-mail messages to customers when books they have ordered arrive.

To ensure the tags are used and read only by BGN in the store, RFID readers placed at the POS terminals will be used to read the tags as the books are sold as well as kill the tags so that they can no longer be read once the books are purchased.

BGN says the store is not a test project, but before rolling out RFID to all its existing 42 stores in 2007, it hopes to learn how best to use RFID through its deployments at the store in Almere and in another new store set to open in September in Maastricht.

BGN worked with its existing application and software developer Progress Software and Dutch systems integrator CaptureTech to put together its RFID system and integrate the RFID data so that it will be able to receive books delivered to the store, locate them on the shelves, and, at the POS terminals, to confirm sales price and initiate reordering of books sold.

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