



Cham, Switzerland – June 21, 2007

Reutlingen Public Library: Mobile conversion online and the new generation of BiblioReturn

Reutlingen Public Library implemented a comprehensive system from Bibliotheca RFID Library Systems to automate the checking in and out of media as part of the modernization work scheduled for the summer of 2007. At a later date, six of the library's ten branches will also introduce RFID into their entire collection of a further 64,500 media. For the city's 112,000 inhabitants, Reutlingen Public Library represents a heavily visited center of information, communication and media that makes a major contribution to the quality of life among the community.

The Public Library, which welcomes more than 500,000 visitors and lends out in excess of 1.4 million media a year, achieved in 2006 rank four of BIX – The German Library Index last year. In using the BiblioChip RFID system, the library wants to raise the level of its customer service, staff focus and operating efficiency. "Visitor polls have made it clear that longer opening hours and the opportunity to borrow and return media outside of library opening hours are among the key requests of our patrons. We expect the new SelfCheck stations to enable us

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to substantially enhance our service. Long lines at the counter will soon be a thing of the past," says library manager Christa Gmelch.

The first step in the whole process, converting the 212,000 media, began back in mid-April 2007. "We were using ten mobile conversion stations and were working at staff desks, too, so as to affix RFID labels to all of the media as quickly and efficiently as possible. This was all done during normal library operations without inconveniencing our patrons at all," explains Renate Goldbrunner, Director of Reader Services and joint project manager. Hartmut Marder, Director of Bibliotheca Germany, explains what's special about the Reutlingen project: "The systems communicate with each other via WLAN, allowing the conversion to be done online at the mobile stations. This ensures that both the media number and specific data from the LMS, such as author and book title, can be read during the process. It is therefore possible to verify immediately whether the medium and the code match up. What's more, since we're working with the Danish data model, all of the necessary data fields are automatically available for the initialization; Meaning that we can do away with the need to update the data against the LMS afterward, thus saving precious time."

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Innovation: BiblioReturn Secure

What stands out in patrons' eyes is the sheer scope of the self-check options that are being introduced. The plans include two BiblioReturn machines inside the library, where people will be able to return media during opening hours. There will also be an outdoor BiblioReturn machine built in to the library wall and protected with safety glass. This machine will only be accessible to those with a valid library card.

A special chamber system was developed and patented to give returns added security. Like a lock on a canal, the system incorporates two hatches. The system at work is very simple: when a book or other item is placed in the return shaft, the front hatch closes, allowing the BiblioReturn to check – without any disturbances – that the item belongs to the library and record it in the inventory as having been returned. Only once the return is approved does the rear hatch open – automatically and very briefly. The book is then transported on a conveyer belt to the sorting machine or to one of the waiting book trolleys. Then the front hatch opens again, ready to accept another return.

The whole process is very fast, which is great for library patrons. Just like its predecessor, the BiblioReturn Secure completes each return in

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seconds. Generally speaking, the speed corresponds to the reaction of the library management system. On average, about 700 books, journals, CDs, DVDs, AV media and so on can be returned within one hour. The hatches make the return shaft's loading intervals less random. The machine, not the user, determines the speed at which items are returned. In other words, all of the returned media are securely logged back into the LMS. With this new machine in place, it is virtually impossible to manipulate any part of the process.

All three BiblioReturn machines will be linked to a complex sorting system enabling media to be sorted on the basis of five or more criteria and giving staff noticeably more time for other tasks.

There will be four of Bibliotheca's free-standing 'Munich' SelfCheck stations available for patrons to check out media independently and to manage their accounts. Two BiblioGates will secure the exits, setting off an alarm if anyone attempts to remove incorrectly checked-out media from the library.

Without a doubt, the careful renovation and the introduction of state-of-the-art technology will serve to enhance the positive image of Reutlingen Public Library in the future.

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For more information please visit

www.stadtbibliothek-reutlingen.de.

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