



REPORT TO THE LIBRARY BOARD

MEETING DATE: JUNE 23, 2011

Session:	Public Session
Subject:	Strategic Plan: Organizational Capacity Building: Radio Frequency Identification Device Feasibility Study Phase One (2010-2011) – Progress Report
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Presented By:	Margaret Wilkinson
Purpose of Report:	For Receipt <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that this report be received.

ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY

The purpose of this report is to inform the Library Board about the work to date of the staff project team assigned the task of undertaking a feasibility study of the use of Radio Frequency Identification Device (RFID) technology as a solution for challenges faced by LPL in its materials handling processes.

BACKGROUND & REVIEW

The LPL Strategic Plan: Organizational Capacity Building strategy identified the need for an initiative to study the potential for the use of RFID technology in the London Public Library environment. RFID technology uses radio waves to transfer data between a reader and an electronic tag attached to items (such as library materials) and communicates with the integrated library system (ILS). It is often used in conjunction with automated materials handling equipment. RFID is a technology solution used by many library systems in Canada, the United States and Europe.

Materials handling (e.g. checkout, checkin, holds processing, materials sorting and moving throughout the system, collections inventorying) is a multi-faceted, labour-intensive process. It is also the backbone of the Library's collections and lending services to the public. Since 2005, borrowing of materials has increased by over 20%. It

is anticipated that by 2016, annual circulation will be over 4.5 million items, a further increase of 12%. Current processes cannot sustain such growth.

Mandate

The Project Team, consisting of B. Whitney (Project Manager), J.Cooper, L. Counsell, D.McCord, M.Richardson, K. Sealy-Johnson, E.Stierwalt, R. Townshend, and M.Wilkinson convened in March, 2011. The mandate was to explore advantages and disadvantages of RFID technology related to effective collections development and management, holds processes, checkout and checkin processes, security enhancements, self-service options, improved customer service and privacy. The team considered the extent that an RFID solution would improve materials handling, holds management and DVD handling; the optimal level of RFID implementation; and alternative solutions.

Progress To Date

LPL partnered with two external organizations during this investigative phase.

- Faculty of Information and Media Studies, U.W.O. - During the Fall, 2010 students enrolled in the course, Research Methods and Statistics, prepared poster sessions on research methodology for studies on the use of RFID in libraries, including the experience of other libraries, how use of RFID is portrayed in the media, reception of RFID by patrons and staff, and privacy issues related to its use. Staff attended the poster sessions in Dec, 2010.
- Pro Bono Students Canada, Faculty of Law, U.W.O. – Pro Bono Students Canada, a national program operating at various Faculties of Law, gives law students the opportunity to provide legal information and research to community organizations and individuals under the mentorship of a lawyer. A group of law students from U.W.O. undertook a study of privacy concerns associated with the use of RFID technology in a public library environment. The team presented their findings to LPL staff in March, 2011.

In addition, the Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) surveyed Canadian libraries in October, 2010 to ascertain which systems have RFID in place or had plans for RFID in the near future. This information was invaluable for the research done by LPL staff.

Actions Completed

- Review of current literature
- Review of privacy issues (FIMS project, Pro Bono Students Canada project)
- Best practices survey
- Telephone interviews conducted with a number of library systems with RFID solutions in place (Brescia College Library, Brantford PL, Hamilton PL, Kitchener PL, Milton PL, Markham PL, Edmonton PL, King County PL (Washington, USA)
- Vendor Information Presentations (3M, Tech Logic, Bibliotheca, MK Sorting Systems)
- Site visits (Brescia College Library, Hamilton Public Library (3 locations – Turner Park Branch, Concession Branch and Central)

- Staff consultation with team working on related Strategic Plan initiative – Process Reengineering (Holds)

Preliminary Findings

The team has developed a research matrix, identifying LPL issues and challenges (holds management; delivery; self checkin; self checkout; security; weeding/inventory; e-resources/market trends) assessed against various solution options which are both technical and non-technical.

NEXT STEPS

The preliminary recommendations from Phase One of this project indicate the need for a more holistic approach to the challenges faced by LPL in its materials handling processes, to include the full spectrum of issues, all related processes, procedures and policies and a more in-depth analysis of options for automation where appropriate.

To this end, a Senior Team Steering Committee on Materials Handling Solutions will be struck to work with smaller staff teams during the next phases of work.

Phase One (2010-2011) – To continue work as above.

Phase Two (2011-2012) - Implement proposed solutions to non-automated aspects of materials handling, address policy issues, develop plan to apply further efficiencies through automated options, and prepare a business case for the City of London 2013-2017 budget process.

Phase Three (2013-2014) – Implement the plan to apply further efficiencies with automated options which may include RFID technology.