

3M Digital Library Assistant helps the University of Nottingham streamline stock management

Back in 2006 the University of Nottingham decided to carry out a full implementation of RFID technology from 3M into its six largest libraries. Its aim was to improve the level of service that it could offer to visitors and to make certain aspects of the library staff's role more efficient. As part of the RFID library system that it chose to implement, the University purchased six Digital Library Assistants (DLAs) from 3M, which have proved so successful that it has recently bought a further two.

Sue Storey, Head of Library Customer Services at the University of Nottingham, explains: "When we were looking to purchase a number of DLAs as part of the RFID package it was vital that the product was simple to use and reliable as we would be using it on a daily basis. When we trialled the DLA from 3M we were very impressed with the technological functions, the maintenance support offered and the usability of the product. When we first introduced the DLA it was used mainly for scanning returned items prior to shelving and to identify any reserved or short loan items, as well items for delivery to our other libraries that had not been put in the book box. At our biggest library up to 25,000 items a week are returned at peak times so the sorting process must be efficient. The DLA has been a significant part of this, which means that items are back on the shelves more quickly and there are fewer queries from students who cannot locate the books they need.



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"We now use the DLA for a wider variety of functions including stock management. Our largest short loan collection is made up of 30,000 items, so past stock reviews have taken us a couple of weeks. Last year we decided to use the DLA for the first time to carry out the review and it took us only a few days. We also carried out a stock check for the first time on two of our other collections. This went very well and complemented our regular DLA checks for missing items.

"These changes to our processes have enabled staff to spend time on new services. We have used the time that has been freed-up by the new systems to introduce a new service that delivers books between all of our libraries and also straight to academics. We are very happy with the performance of the DLA and we have been working with 3M to help provide feedback for future developments. We have already put ourselves on the waiting list for the next generation 3M DLA!"

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