

PALMER, Martin. *Making the most of RFID in libraries.* London: Facet, 2009. 154 pages. ISBN 978-1-85604-634-3. Price £44.95.

Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) is being adopted by libraries around the world at a very rapid rate. It is becoming seen as a tool to enable library managers to transform and modernize their services in a way that meets the needs of their 21st century customers – not just as a replacement for barcodes but allowing greater access, more staff time for assisting readers, freeing up space, better stock control, etc.

This would be a most useful book for anyone who is considering introducing RFID in their library. It is easy to read, with the key questions at the beginning of each chapter and a concise summary at the end. It is also very practical with checklists, sample tables for evaluation of systems, risk assessment and calculating savings and a list of RFID system suppliers at the end. It covers a wide range of issues including standards, privacy, health and safety, library design, building a business case, staffing efficiencies, project management and choosing a supplier. As a systems manager I was somewhat disappointed on the shortage of technical detail – there is just one paragraph on SIP which gives little idea of how it works – but no doubt this is generally left to the LMS and RFID suppliers to sort out. I would also have liked more about the use of RFID for shelf checking, as this could be one of the main benefits of retagging stock already fitted with electromagnetic tags.

The book is not really aimed at the research community but there are many areas that could usefully receive investigation. The author often mentions that this is a relatively new technology for libraries and there are various issues still to be resolved. Some of these are technical, such as how to tag audiovisual material, how to interface RFID systems with LMS systems (and ideally integrate them into one), standards covering what data to include on the tag. (ISO 28560 was agreed by having two mutually exclusive sections for the approach used by the UK and USA on one hand and north-European countries on the other!) Other issues are in the management area: how to make better use of floor space once the issue desk is no longer needed, how to sell the idea to staff who fear that their jobs are threatened. But perhaps the most interesting - and to me rather unexpected - area is allaying readers' fears about invasion of privacy. Apparently an American (allegedly "Christian") website has over sixty video clips devoted to demonstrating links between DFID and the devil, related to the 'mark of the beast' in the Book of Revelation. There has been markedly less concern in Europe, but as RFID tags become able to carry more data and perhaps readable over greater distances privacy needs to be kept under review.

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