LIBRAMATION

Libramation was formerly Codeco, a name it used for more than five years in North America. It has been manufacturing and selling patron self-charging and book return units for several years. About two years ago it introduced a return unit with a sorting component.

When RFID technology began to be purchased by libraries, Libramation modified its products to accommodate the technology. When the opportunity exists, it bids a complete RFID library system.

Tags

The tags, called Lib-Chips, are 2.0 by 3.0-inch passive, read-write tags with 1,024 bits of storage and other dimensions for CDs, videotapes, and audiocassettes. Of the memory capacity, two 32-bit sectors contain the unique factory assigned serial number, two more are dedicated to programming, and the remaining 28 sectors or 896 bits are available for user reprogrammable memory.

The tags are manufactured by X-ident using a Philips Superconductors chip. Each chip has the capacity to store type of material, author, title, call number, barcode, shelf location, last borrowed date, and last returned date. A theft bit can be set to provide security without an interface to an automated library system.

The left tag is for books; the right tag is for CDs and DVDs.

The tags also can be affixed to patron cards for controlling access or can be loaded with monetary funds to function as a debit card.

Conversion station

The conversion station or programming unit consists of Libramation's Commander reader and a generic barcode reader. After the barcode is read, Commander transfers the information to the tag. Additional information can be added to the tag. Then the staff affixes the tag to the library material.

A printer can be added if a library wishes to print the barcode on the RFID tag. Printing is usually done when some branches—or other libraries, in the case of a consortium sharing an automated library system—are not yet using RFID.

Staff workstation

The staff workstation is a single charging and discharging reader that may be

installed into a circulation desk or placed on top of it. Patrons may swipe their own library cards to initiate the charging process. A staff member can then view the patron status on the flat-screen monitor.

The patron places the items to be charged on the desk next to the screen. A staff member then slides the stack by hand along the desk, where it passes over the reader. An acoustic signal indicates the reader has successfully identified the items and the inventory is updated.

Once read, the materials are automatically desensitized. The service works in reverse when the items are returned. The workstation includes a receipt printer.

Patron self-charging station

A PC-based patron self-charging station is available. The unit also can be used as a patron self-discharging unit. Step-by-step instructions are displayed on a flat-panel screen, but a Help button on the screen also may be pressed to request assistance from the library staff.

The patron is asked to insert the patron card into a slot. At the option of the library, a PIN also may be required. Software identifies items that may have several separable components (such as a media kit) and prompts the patron to charge the material and confirm the number of components present.

A hybrid model that accommodates both barcodes and RFID is available if a library is making the transition to RFID over time. Each unit includes a receipt printer. The unit interfaces with an automated library system using the SIP2 protocol.

The unit also maintains an independent database of the items charged. If the circulation server fails, the unit allows patrons to continue to charge materials.

Exit sensors

The exit sensors are available as a single aisle (two sensors) or as a double aisle (three sensors). The aisle opening is 40 inches.

The sensors are available in paintable plastic or in wood. They are high-speed, capable of reading up to 60 tags a second.

Wood Exit Sensors.

Bookdrop readers

A reader can be installed in a bookdrop so the items are read as they drop into a bin.

Patron self-discharging stations

Two patron self-discharging stations are offered, an ACT-inside unit and an ACT-outside unit (more convenient for patrons but must be weather-resistant). Each

has a color monitor and receipt printer. The patron starts the process by touching the Start prompt on the screen. The patron places the items on the conveyor belt one at a time and, as the item travels through the tunnel, the reader detects each item, updates the inventory, and resets the theft bit. After the patron discharges all the items and presses the Finished button on the screen, a receipt prints.

Sorters

Sorters are custom-designed and can include from two to an almost unlimited number of bins. The unit attaches to the ACT-interior or ACT-exterior book return units by means of conveyor belts. A two-bin sorter typically separates returned materials into those to be reshelved and those to be placed on the hold shelves. If more bins are added, materials can be sorted by area of the library.

Portable reader

Libramation's hand-held reader can be used to inventory materials on the shelves by passing it along the shelves at a distance of up to 12 inches. The information is recorded in the unit and then uploaded into the automated library system, or it can be transmitted using wireless communication.

By setting the program parameters, the reader is able to assist staff in tasks such as reorganizing misshelved items, identifying heavy use of materials by looking at the count status, or any number of data queries.

Customers

Libramation has identified seven customers:

- King County Public Library System (Wash.)—five systems
- New York Public Library—seven systems
- Puyallup Public Library (Wash.)—four systems
- London Public Library of Ontario—seven systems
- Fraser Valley Regional Library of British Columbia—14 systems
- Utrecht Public Library of the Netherlands—one system
- Krefeld Niederrhein Hochschule of Germany—one system