Burleson TEXAS

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE

Sally Ellertson
Public Information Officer
141 West Renfro
Burleson, Texas 76028-4261
817-426-9622
F: 817-426-9390
sellertson@burlesontx.com
www.burlesontx.com

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The Burleson Public Library is using new technology to improve service!

The Library checked out more than 414,000 titles, answered more than 31,000 questions, hosted more than 11,000 people at Library programs, and had more than 137,000 visitors last year. That's a lot for a staff of 10.9 full time equivalent employees. But, the Library exists to serve people, and that is the reason behind the change in how materials are processed.

RFID, or radio frequency identification, technology is nothing new. However, for libraries this technology has tremendous benefits to improving the overall experience and efficient use of library services. RFID tags are attached to library materials. When items are placed on special equipment, the tag is temporarily energized, and the computer recognizes the title and can adjust the security setting depending on if the item is being checked out or returned. This makes self-checkout easy! The system includes a new security gate system, better inventory control, and a mobile device that allows staff to check out materials to patrons anywhere in the library.

But, the neatest feature of the system is how library materials are returned. In the past, items were simply dropped into a large bin all together and required a lot of staff time to sort, check in, inspect, and transfer items to other libraries or carts to be shelved. The new system features an ATM-style touch screen outside of the building. Items are inserted one at a time. The item goes down a conveyor belt, is checked in, and then is automatically sorted into the appropriate bin. A large television screen is mounted in the lobby so that patrons can see their items being checked in and sorted thanks to a camera mounted in the book return room. At night, a standard book return slot is opened outside the building in case of a power failure or equipment problem overnight.

"This system saves a great deal of staff time and significantly reduces the amount of time spent handling materials," Heather Huse, library circulation supervisor, said. "We would much rather focus our time on serving people rather than handling materials, and this system allows us to do that while also reducing lines at the circulation desk."

Marc Marchand, director of library services, is very proud of the Library staff and volunteers who completed the tagging of some 65,000 items in just eight weeks.

"We finished the project ahead of schedule and under budget, but it has not been without its challenges," Marchand said. "Implementation required changes to the system software that proved to be very complicated, but the issues are being resolved and the response from the public has been very positive."

In fact, the public is being credited with helping to make the system better. "Our patrons have been amazing, enthusiastic, and very patient with the new system, but that's Burleson. New things are sometimes challenging, but we work together," Marchand said. "It's a lot of fun to take patrons to the workroom and show them the technology. Their enthusiasm and ideas are contagious. You just don't get that if most of your time is spent on stuff instead of people, and people are what it's all about."

For more information, please call the Burleson Public Library at 817-426-9207. The library is located at 248 S.W. Johnson Ave.