

# INTERVIEWS

The following question-answer information was gleaned from 50 telephone interviews with library administrators who were randomly selected from a list of 1,000 mid-size and large public libraries and 1,000 mid-size and large academic libraries. Twenty-five interviews were completed with public librarians and 25 with academic librarians.

### **Has your library installed RFID?**

Two public libraries and one academic library already have RFID systems, each for fewer than 18 months. All are pleased with their systems. Each is replacing an electromagnetic (EM) system. They estimate two to four years to complete the conversion.

### **Have you seen a comprehensive demonstration of an RFID system?**

Twelve of the public library administrators and three of the academic library administrators have seen a comprehensive demonstration of an RFID system. Only three of the public library administrators and one of the academic library administrators, however, have seen comprehensive demonstrations of more than two systems.

These numbers suggest most library administrators are not yet ready to purchase an RFID system. Library administrators like to keep an eye on a technology for two or three years before committing to it.

### **Have you read any long articles or evaluations of RFID technology?**

All but one of the public library administrators and 18 of the academic library administrators have read a long article or evaluation of RFID technology.

Public library administrators appear to be more familiar with RFID technology than academic library administrators, which suggests that public libraries will adopt RFID more quickly than academic libraries.

### **Do you envision purchasing an RFID system within two years?**

Three of the public library administrators and one of the academic library administrators envision a purchase within two years.

The pace of 30 to 40 installations a year worldwide will not likely increase in the next two years.

### **Do you envision purchasing an RFID system within five years?**

Twelve of the public library administrators and eight of the academic library administrators envision a purchase within five years, which suggests the pace of RFID procurement will pick up in two-plus years.

### **What will be the major applications of RFID in your library?**

Twenty of the public library administrators and 24 of the academic library administrators see security as a major application in their libraries. Twenty-three of the public library administrators and 17 of the academic library administrators see improved staff productivity at circulation as a major application.

Twenty-four of the public library administrators and 15 of the academic library administrators see patron convenience as a major application. Nine of the public library administrators and 18 of the academic library administrators see inventorying as a major application. Eight of the public library administrators and four of the academic library administrators see materials handling as a major application.

The fact that most libraries do not inventory regularly is making library administrators give that application a lower priority than security, staff productivity, and patron convenience. Only libraries with high circulation statistics are interested in materials handling. Another factor in the case of academic libraries may be the use of relatively low-cost student labor at circulation.

### **What information would you like to see on RFID tags?**

All 50 interviewees would like to have the identification numbers for items on the RFID tags. Sixteen of the public library administrators and 20 of the academic library administrators would like to have a theft bit on the tags. Seventeen of the public library administrators and 20 of the academic library administrators would like to have a library location code on the tags.

Twenty-one of the public library administrators and 23 of the academic library administrators would like a read-write tag that can accommodate additional information, although only three of the public librarians and two of the academic librarians know what they would seek to add: brief bibliographic information.

This research suggests that read-write tags with at least 256 bits capacity are likely to be the most desired in the future.

### **What will be the major constraints in your library's purchase of RFID?**

Five of the public library administrators and three of the academic library administrators think current equipment prices are too high. Twenty of the public library administrators and 22 of the academic library administrators think the current tag price of about \$0.85 is too high.

### **What is the highest tag price you are willing to accept?**

One of the public library administrators is willing to accept a tag price of \$0.75, a price about \$0.10 lower than the current price. None of the academic library administrators is willing to accept a tag price of \$0.75.

Seventeen of the public library administrators and 14 of the academic library administrators are willing to accept a tag price of \$0.50. Seven of the public library administrators and 11 of the academic library administrators are not willing to spend more than \$0.25 per tag.

Expecting a tag price of \$0.50 in the next two or three years is realistic, but a tag price of \$0.25 anytime within the next five years is highly unlikely.

### Do you have any other comments on RFID?

- 3M's combination of EM and RFID does not make sense (two comments).
- Checkpoint's reliance on the interface to the automated library system for security makes me uncomfortable. I prefer to have a security bit (that is, a theft bit).
- I would like to see interoperability among RFID systems so that the equipment can be replaced by that of another vendor without requiring replacement of the tags (eight comments).
- I would like to see RFID tags that can be concealed (two comments).
- I bet 3M will be forced to go to a 100% RFID solution within a year or two to stay competitive.
- There is too little objective information about RFID systems for libraries (three comments).
- It is going to take years to convert our large collection to RFID (15 comments).
- We have 3M now and will probably stay with it because all of our collection already has strips in it (two comments).
- The exit sensors of all the vendors are unattractive (five comments).
- I am confused by the conflicting representations made by RFID vendors (six comments).
- We need to spend more on books and less on technology.