



# Customer Satisfaction from “Bulletproof” Technology

The staff at the Wilson County Public Library wanted to elevate the patron experience. They got that—and “giant savings of time and energy”—all thanks to the 3M™ RFID System.

## The Need

Many libraries embrace new technology as a response to increasing demands, often coupled with steady or declining budgets. For North Carolina’s Wilson County Public Library, the implementation of a radio frequency identification (RFID) system was driven largely by a desire to improve customer satisfaction among the county’s 80,000 residents.

“When I joined the staff, the board told me they wanted to do whatever was necessary to create a customer experience that was as efficient and pleasant as possible,” recalled Greg Needham, Library Director. He immediately thought of RFID technology for the improvements it would bring to the customer experience, as well as for the productivity gains that would be possible.

**“If you are sold on the technology, you want to work with a company that is going to be in it for the long haul, a company that does research and development and continues to come up with new ideas.”**

“I ran down all the things we could do better with RFID,” he recalled. “And I talked about the ‘wow’ factor, the sense that we’d be on the cutting edge.” Needham also detailed how RFID would allow for a fast inventory and reconciliation of the collection, which contains approximately 150,000 items. Finally, he outlined how the new RFID security gates would eliminate the frustration and distraction caused by frequent false alarms from the library’s old system. “And the board said, ‘That’s what we want.’”

## The Solution

A plan was developed to install a 3M RFID System in the main library and five branches, which have a combined annual circulation of 220,000 items. The county’s implementation—with workstations in each branch, along with a book drop, security gates and a 3M™ Digital Library Assistant at the central library—began in 2007.

Conversion started in the smaller branch libraries, where staff could learn the tagging and workstation procedures in relative calm, and concluded in the library’s main facility. The library relied on one conversion station on loan from 3M and another that staff fashioned from a cart, a PC and one of the workstations.

The tagging went smoothly, with no disruption in service, in part because the library paid attention to the chemistry of the team members who handled the conversion. “You don’t want to put slower volunteers with your caffeinated young staffers,” Needham said. While most of the teams were able to convert 300 to 400 items an hour, he and an assistant peaked at 1,000. “It was amazing,” he recalled. “It was aerobic.”

Even in these early days, staff resistance was minimal. Some members began experimenting with the system before it was fully implemented. “I remember suggesting that they try it out and practice with a single book,” Needham said, “and soon I’d hear it beeping over and over and they told me they were doing five items at a time.”



# Create a More Human Library

## The Result

Once the system went live, the benefits to staff and customers were immediate. “There were naysayers who predicted problems, but the start-up was flawless,” Needham said. “And now everyone uses it. You see small children joyfully showing their grandparents how the SelfCheck™ System works. And of course our staff members at the circulation desks are totally hooked on it. They realize that it gives them giant savings of time and energy.”

Use of the self-service feature has climbed steadily, growing by up to 25 percent per quarter. That number is expected to increase substantially in the near future when the library allows its high volume collection of CDs and DVDs to be checked out by patrons.

The system’s security features have also been a vast improvement. The previous system generated so many false alarms that the staff routinely disregarded it. As a result, the library had virtually no security. Now, their RFID system generates an alarm only when a customer has neglected to check out an item.

Has the library achieved its goal of providing a pleasant and efficient customer experience? “We ask our customers about the system while they are using it,” Needham said, “and universally, the answer is ‘I love it.’ We’ve never had a negative response—and that’s important to us. When people want to use the library it’s better for them and it makes the world a better place. RFID helps us do that because it touches so many parts of what we do.”

He added that the investment in RFID is even more valuable in difficult economic times. “As the economy goes down, our business goes up. I’m really glad that we have the RFID system installed. We think we’re going to be very busy.”

## Working with a Leader

Needham said the system’s success could be traced, in part, to the decision to go with 3M.

“If you are sold on the technology and plan to make an investment,” he said, “you want to work with a company that is going to be in it for the long haul, a company that will be here ten years from now. You don’t want to work with a company that might go out of business or get bought out. And you want to buy from a company that does research and development and continues to come up with new ideas.”

“We trusted 3M and we never looked back. Our technical staff has told us they’ve never seen new technology work this well. It never malfunctions. With most devices, if you get new software, you usually get all manner of chaos—but not this. It’s been bulletproof.”

December 2008



## 3M Library Systems

3M Center, Bldg. 225-4N-14  
St. Paul, MN 55144-1000  
USA  
1-800-328-0067  
[www.3M.com/us/library](http://www.3M.com/us/library)

Please recycle. Printed in USA.  
© 3M 2009. All rights reserved.  
3M, Tattle-Tape and SelfCheck  
are trademarks of 3M.