

Book Industry Communication

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RFID/LMS Stakeholder Meeting held on Monday 19 January 2009 at CILIP

In attendance:

Divinder Bains	3M
Danisha Bathia	Talis Information
Roy Beaven	Bertrams Library Services
Alex Birchall	Middlesex University
Marcus Blackburn	Civica
Paul Chartier	Praxis Consultants
Ajay Chauhan	2CQR
Catherine Cooke	Westminster Libraries
Paul Dalton	Intelligent
Simon Edwards	BIC
Mick Fortune	BIC consultant (moderator)
Jo Richardson	Ex Libris
Janet Holden	Norfolk Libraries
Alan Hopkinson	Middlesex University
Nick Hunt	Plescon
Jane Johnson	Blackwell's Book Services
David Jones	Norfolk Libraries
Peter Kilborn	BIC
Gordon Love	Intelligent
Ian Manson	Infor
Martin Palmer	Essex Libraries
Colin Parker	Axiell
Steven Roberts	Axiell
Elisabeth Robinson	OCLC
Heather Sherman	Dawson Books
David Thomas	SirsiDynix
Delwyn Thomas	Civica
John Woolley	CILIP
Paul Woolvine	3M

Apologies:

Tim Pond	D-Tech Direct
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Martin Palmer, Chair of the BIC/CILIP RFID in Libraries Group, introduced Mick Fortune as moderator for the meeting, which had been convened to address

interoperability issues between RFID systems and library management systems in the light of an imminent ISO standard for tag structure and content.

Mick made some introductory remarks about the present state of RFID development in UK libraries. Although RFID has been very successfully implemented in a number of libraries for self-service, very little had been achieved in the way of improving interoperability between different RFID systems, or on agreeing common standards for tag data storage.

Many libraries that had adopted RFID had been unaware that the choices they had made limited their options to work with other RFID or LMS suppliers. As early adopters begin to realise the potential of the technology to deliver other library operations many have been disappointed to discover that a lack of data standards effectively blocks the way forward.

As a result of his earlier work in both the RFID and LMS markets Mick has become increasingly concerned at the apparent lack of understanding of some key issues at the interface between these two systems, and believes that the market should adopt a common data standard as a first step to moving the technology forward.

Later this year ISO will be publishing a new data standard for library RFID. The result of considerable deliberation over the last few years, 28560 promised to address the need for a common data model. Sadly the international group had not been able to reach consensus on the actual implementation of the model and had compromised by splitting the standard into three parts. ISO 28560-1 identifies all of the elements currently considered to be the most useful to libraries and their suppliers and are shared by the two models proposed in 28560-2 and 28560-3. However, the method of encoding the data differs between the two models.

ISO 28560-2 uses variable-length fields, allowing for greater flexibility in the data. In particular it allows both for selective reading and locking of fields. ISO 28560-3 more closely reflects the practice of other European markets in using a fixed-length model for data.

Mick began by asking the RFID companies present to state their position on ISO 28560-1.

Each of the companies present recognised the limitations of the present state of affairs and agreed to move to a policy of promoting the use of ISO 28560-1 when it is available. Whilst there is no possibility of prescribing the use of the new standard it was felt that if libraries were aware of the benefits of doing so they would be likely to create a “de facto” requirement for support of 28560 by demanding support for it in their tender requests.

The meeting then considered whether to go further and decide between 28560-2 and 28560-3 and after some helpful guidance from Paul Chartier it was suggested that we should recommend the adoption of 28560-2. The meeting showed its agreement by a show of hands.

There then followed some lengthy discussion of some of the issues that have already been identified by libraries as being of concern. David Jones from Norfolk reported that they had been forced to add an extra field to their RFID tags to prevent the unauthorised loan of adult materials to junior borrowers. The meeting recognised that this was precisely the kind of issue that should be addressed by the new standard. Working in conjunction with LMS suppliers it was felt that a common solution, using fields supported under 28560-1, could be found.

Other examples were considered, with the result that Mick eventually proposed that a more detailed discussion of such issues would be needed to identify the best way forward. The immediate objective would be to identify a minimum data set for RFID tags within the options provided by 28560-2 and try to reach general acceptance for this by means of a future workshop session and through the BIC/CILIP group. There remain several threads to this discussion that will need to be resolved. Firstly, how can libraries avoid the duplication of data in their LMSs and on an RFID tag; and/or deal with the situation where duplicated data on tags is required to permit continued self-issue when LMSs are down? Secondly, how should data be “transported” from the LMS to the tags? If SIP is to be further adapted and improved to handle additional fields how should this be achieved? The 3M representatives were asked to clarify the present status and means of development of the existing SIP standard, which they agreed to do.

Another immediate problem concerns existing proprietary standards. Firstly, all those libraries that have already adopted RFID will need to decide whether to try and move to the new standard and, secondly, migration strategies will need to be developed to enable such a change.

Peter Kilborn of BIC undertook to consider the best way forward for the group to realise its ambitions – either through workshops or other means and report back as a matter of urgency. There was widespread support for Paul Dalton’s view that we should move quickly so as not to lose momentum.

It was finally agreed that the decision of the meeting be advertised as widely as possible and that efforts be increased to make libraries aware of the changes that will be required as a result of both the publication of the standard and the group’s decisions.