

Check-in for the new millenium!

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Checking in items from the dump bin to the shelving trolley

Check-in of library materials has been taken into a new era at the Mt Gravatt campus library of Griffith University. During a library extension program in 1999 a new ergonomic check-in system was installed that leaves previous practice firmly in the past.

The library clients return their loans through five return chutes, rough sorting them into broad call number ranges. Griffith is quickly heading for the ninety per cent rough sorting success rate achieved by the Victorian University of Technology, St Albans campus, where a similar system was pioneered in 1997/98. The external chutes are on a pedestrian thoroughfare with twenty-four hour access, security lighting, and are adjacent to several ten-minute parking spaces to facilitate easy drop-off of library returns.

The external return chutes are aligned with five height-adjustable return bins inside the library, and a height-adjustable mobile desk runs on fixed tracks down the line of return bins. The return bins are emptied individually by sliding the books, at level, across the desk and through the 3M Express Transaction Unit in a single movement, to be fine sorted on to shelving trolleys. These trolleys are then delivered to the collection areas ready for shelving with each containing only a limited call number range of resources.

The ergonomic benefits for staff have been substantial. Check-in staff have been able to reduce the number

of steps in processing returns from seven to three, and with over 120 000 returns at Mt Gravatt each year the savings have been considerable. The electric lifting mechanisms on the return bins take the hard work out of bending over bins to remove heavy contents. Benefits for shelving staff include the arrival at the stacks of trolleys that are already sorted to contain a limited range of call numbers. Both the time and effort required to complete the processing of returned materials have been significantly reduced.

The drive for innovation had to be firmly held in sight is staff were to be able to access such state-of-the-art equipment. At a cost of approximately \$50 000, this ergonomic system needed capital funding during tight budgetary times. Questions are often asked as to why the existing way is no longer satisfactory. But the benefits of such advances are obvious to anyone seeing or using the system, and include higher staff morale for those involved in high repetition work. Workplace health and safety aspects of the system have been praised by University advisors as leading edge.

The system was designed by John Herring, consultant ergonomist, in liaison with Wharrington International Library Returns System. Such specialist advice from a qualified ergonomist sets new benchmarks for a range of work duties involved in libraries and brings many previously old fashioned and pedantic routines into the new millenium. ■




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