Queens Library reaps multiple benefits from library automation

Since installing its first Automated Material Handling (AMH) system in 2009, Queens Library has worked with Lyngsoe Systems to roll out automation across 62 community libraries. As a result, the library has achieved:

- Greatly improved customer service
- Significant resource savings
- Enhanced security

Case: Queens Library
THE CHALLENGE
Serving 2.3 million people in 62 communities in New York City, Queens Library has an annual circulation of 13 million items. With such a staggering volume to sort and shelve, the library stood to save a massive amount of resources by enhancing its efficiency.

The library also wanted to improve the customer experience by offering extended access for return items. However, self-return was challenging because of security issues, risk of overload, and potential confusion with nearby libraries such as NY Public Library or Brooklyn Public Library.

THE SOLUTION
Queens Library opted for library automation via the Lyngsoe Automated Material Handling (AMH) system, which automatically identifies and sorts library items based on RFID-tagging. The automatization has reduced errors, ensuring items are correctly shelved. Using the ergonomic Lyngsoe Systems Ergo Trolleys™, staff can safely transport more materials while avoiding strenuous repetitive work.

Self-service kiosks provide customers with a much-appreciated ability to return items 24/7, as the ID detection software automatically rejects any items not belonging to the Queens Library system. Customers can choose to receive guidance and receipts in their native language, from Punjabi to Polish, Spanish, and several Chinese dialects. Built-in cameras help documenting criminal activity and clarify incidents. Today, 60 branches enjoy automation, with two more under way.

BENEFITS
• Vastly reduced turnaround time, significantly speeding up distribution and shelving across all branches while reducing errors
• Enhanced customer service, including 24/7 self-service with multilingual interfaces and more staff time dedicated to patron interaction
• Improved security through prevention of overload and cameras installed in self-service kiosks

RESULTS
All library automation systems installed are operating effectively, increasing efficiency, elevating security, and improving customer service across all 60 branches. While the turnaround time has been cut in half, staff has swapped strenuous manual work for customer interactions. Customers can now return items 24/7, with no risk of misplacing items they borrowed from another library system nearby such as NY Public Library or Brooklyn Public Library. With faster circulation, it takes less time to wait for holds and a wider selection of items is available for lending.

"Over time, our collaboration has developed into a real partnership, where Lyngsoe Systems develops extra features and solutions to meet our needs as they arise. For example, they've added a camera feature to some of our self-service kiosks, to help resolve any issues at time of a customer's return transaction."

– James Phelan
Director of Security at Queens Library

ABOUT QUEENS LIBRARY
With 1,500 employees, 62 affiliate branches and an annual circulation of 13 million items, Queens Library is one of the largest libraries in the United States. It serves the 2.3 million-strong, multiethnic population of Queens in New York City, with an average of 40,000 people entering the libraries’ doors each day. In addition, Queens Library runs seven Adult Learning Centers and two Family Literacy Centers.

http://www.queenslibrary.org/