

30 April 2014

To: Alan Phillips
From: Bruce Compton

Re: Evaluation of RFID RFP responses

I have completed my evaluation of the four RFID RFP responses. Reasons for ratings:

Demco's response was quite spartan compared to the others. Furthermore, the two of the five references are university or special libraries and are therefore not relevant.

Tech-Logic's presentation was far better than Demco's, but I found the illustrations of their patron interface to be visually boring. I never found an image of a self-check unit in their response. I didn't find any reporting of fault detection on the self-check units or evidence of a command center to manage all of the devices. I didn't find the support/maintenance section comparable to either 3M or Bibliotheca, and there wasn't enough "under the hood" information to make a comparison to the other products. It is curious that this response seems to be extolling the virtues of their AMH product rather than what we were requesting. The Tech-Logic AMH offering has some features that make it a strong contender when the city sends out an RFP for the AMH.

After reviewing the responses, I find that 3M and Bibliotheca would both meet our needs. If 3M returned bills from the coin/bill acceptor and better monitored the faults in the coin box, the decision would be more easily decided in their favor. Nevertheless, I give 3M a slight advantage.

Patron interface: Advantage 3M

I generally preferred the self-check display of the 3M unit over the Bibliotheca product, but in some instances, their illustrations have an almost identical presentation. The tie-in to Novelist Select and the display of library promotions gives an advantage to 3M.

The 3M self-check units themselves are slightly more attractive. I like the fact that they have a shelf on which to put things while checking out. The picture provided by Bibliotheca had no such shelf and would require additional furniture.

The AV locker seems more ergonomically placed on the 3M unit than on the Bibliotheca unit. Neither is what I would call "integrated."

Payment Processing: Advantage Bibliotheca

Neither has an advantage for debit/credit processing. Neither allows for separate minimum payment amounts for the two.

Bibliotheca holds an advantage regarding the coin box. It recycles bills and gives bills in change. Based on RFP responses, Bibliotheca seems to have better reporting of fault conditions vis-à-vis the bill/coin box. If we go with 3M, I would recommend putting a dollar bill changer on the first floor.

We don't have any experience judging the load that the public will put on the coin boxes, but we do know that the public is not well served by returning a large handful of coins instead of bills and change. If we anticipate collecting a lot of cash and minimizing staff intervention, Bibliotheca is by far a better choice.

System manager: toss-up

3M provides a "Command Center" that manages all of the kiosks, the gate and the AMH. Bibliotheca provides a hosted "SmartAdmin" that manages the same set of hardware. It seems from the responses that the Bibliotheca software may detect and report more coin/bill acceptor issues than 3M's.

If the library doesn't purchase an AMH of the same brand as the rest of the package, there will be two software packages.

IT interface: Advantage 3M

Both products can operate in Offline Mode.

Both 3M and Bibliotheca can be configured to automatically load transactions that were stored when the ILS was unavailable.

3M's software is 64bit. Bibliotheca's product is 32bit. (This is a very minor advantage for 3M).

Bibliotheca's SmartAdmin is hosted, meaning that when the Internet is down, it is unavailable, but it potentially means less local support. 3M's software and databases are locally mounted, and this fits better into our IT environment. For 3M's product, an SQL server is required. We can use an existing SQL server or install SQL on a new server in the library.

3M's Kaseya (remote management client-server) sounds like what we want: a highly secure way of diagnosing and correcting problems as well as pushing updates.

Development Environment: toss-up

Bibliotheca is a SirsiDynix strategic partner and is said to be well integrated into the SirsiDynix development environment. As an existing customer, we haven't had any issues with our Bibliotheca products as they interface with SirsiDynix Symphony.

3M is also a strategic partner, but doesn't seem to be so tightly integrated as Bibliotheca. The SIP standard was developed (and patented) by 3M, so there is no doubt that it will work on 3M products.

Support and Service: Advantage 3M

3M has two local (i.e. Houston) field technicians. We had no difficulty getting service when our Checkpoint gate required attention.

We have had no such field experience with Bibliotheca, but they did provide replacement parts that we could install. Phone support has been good. I ding Bibliotheca for the long-standing debit/credit minimum payment issue that we thought that they were trying to address, but according to their RFP response, they are not attempting to resolve the issue, giving a "that's the way that it works" response.