

Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) Policy

The El Dorado County Library recently adopted the Tech Logic Corporation radio frequency identification (RFID) system. RFID technology is being utilized to speed up the checkout process for library users, improve inventory management and help automate the handling of library materials. With this system, library users will be able to check out their own items quickly and easily. The technology also provides a security system to protect materials from theft. RFID is currently implemented at the El Dorado Hills Branch Library.

What is RFID?

RFID is a data collection technology that relies on radio waves to automatically identify items – which in the case of the library includes books, CDs, DVDs, videos, etc. The technology transfers data from an RFID tag to a reader and then to the library's circulation database. An RFID tag is placed on every library item with the barcode number of that item stored on the tag. When the tagged item is placed near a reader, the barcode of that item is sent to the library's circulation system and the item is checked in or out. Items placed in the outside and inside bookdrop will be checked in automatically.

Is any personal information stored on the RFID tag?

No personal information is recorded on the RFID tag when an item is checked out or checked in. The only information stored on the tag is the barcode of the item. Links between borrowers and the items they borrow are maintained in the Library's circulation system and are broken after the item is returned. The library takes all reasonable steps to safeguard its circulation system and prevent unauthorized access to it.

Can the RFID tag be read once I leave the library?

RFID tags used in library applications do not have an internal power source or transmitter. Therefore, they can only be read from a distance of two feet or less when the tag reflects a signal from an RFID reader. Therefore, it is not possible for someone to read the tag from the street or another building or by satellite.

Are there any health risks associated with RFID and radio waves?

The radio waves in the library's RFID system operate at 13.56 MHz which is at the low-end of the electromagnetic spectrum. The waves coming from RFID readers in the library (check out stations and security gates) have approximately the same strength as those coming from your car radio.

Questions or comments about the El Dorado County Library's use of RFID should be directed to the Library Director, branch manager, or by email at lib-pl@eldoradocountylibrary.org.