



Kent Library District comparison of RFID Inventory devices



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FE Technologies Live Scanning Wand outperforms all others on the market.

The FE Technologies Live Scanning Wand is a state of the art inventory tool that's being discovered by US Libraries as the ultimate tool in stock management. Along with its highly accurate and speedy RFID read rate, the Live Scanning Wand also allows staff to perform quick check-ins of items throughout the library.



Having been disappointed with the older, expensive and inaccurate scanning technology that most RFID vendors were offering, the Kent District Library (KDL) decided to do a thorough comparison of inventory wands currently available from a range of vendors.

The following report from the Kent District Library's December 2022 Board of Trustees Packet is the result of a series of working tests that Library staff performed on the FE Technologies Live Scanning Wand and those of our competitors. Against the inventory tools of our competitors FE Technologies came out miles ahead with better accuracy, a wider level of functionality including the ability to check-in items "live", and cheaper and easy to obtain component parts.

If your library is considering investing in a value for money, high performing inventory device, read further for detailed insight on how the FE Technologies Live Scanning Wand outperforms in terms of ease of use of software, increased functionality, speed and accuracy.



We'd love to discuss our RFID library solutions with your team. We can gladly set up a demonstration of our products at your premises, arrange a tour of our site, or a visit to one of our up and running RFID libraries.

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PURPOSE

KDL is interested in acquiring 29 Live Scanning Wands which will streamline the item check-in process for staff and enable them to do routine scans of items in the stacks to find mis-filed or checked-out items. Additionally, these wands have increased accuracy and functionality compared to the RFID wands we currently have, decreasing the amount of double-work staff must perform because of device errors.



OVERVIEW/NEEDS/BACKGROUND INFO

A couple of years ago KDL purchased 9 RFID wands that must be shared between branches but when they proved to be less than satisfactory, it was decided not to purchase any more from that vendor. When we published the RFP for new RFID Equipment, we took time to see what improvements had been made, if any. One vendor, FE Technologies, showed up with a very different wand that caught our eye.

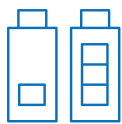
KDL recently tested four of FE Technologies' Live Scanning Wands at the following branches: Wyoming, Plainfield, Spencer, and Walker. This pilot phase lasted for a period of 3 weeks. Overall, staff feedback on the wands was very positive and they agreed that the FE wand not only resolves multiple problems with the current wands but also expands functionality by adding new capabilities.

After this rigorous testing of FE Technologies' Live Scanning Wands during the pilot phase, KDL feels confident in their functionality and would like to purchase enough for every branch to have at least one (2 for branches with higher-volume circulation) and for Service Center use.

BENEFITS



Improved time-saving benefit checking-in items



Batteries are much cheaper compared with current wand



Improved software interface compared with current wand



Improved scanning accuracy compared with current wand



More durable than current wand and replacement parts are easier to acquire



Ability to scan entire collection regularly to find mis-filed or checked-out items, which improves browsability of the stacks, benefitting patrons, and keeps patron accounts and the ILS more accurate



Since the FE wands are a better product, KDL feels comfortable purchasing one for each branch, eliminating the need for branches to share a single device, something that caused additional wear-and-tear in transit and also made it impossible for every branch to fully benefit from having one on-hand at all times

IMPLEMENTATION

Once the wands have been purchased and shipped to KDL, the wands will be configured jointly by the IT department and the Pilot Team with assistance from the library ILS Coordinator. Staff cross-training will be undertaken by those who participated in the pilot process under the guidance of library Regional Manager. The library manager has organized a small group of “power” users to help with deployment, established weekly & monthly check-in meetings to help each branch leverage the wand fully. Ongoing support will be provided by FE Technologies, should we have technical issues with the devices.

DEVICE COMPARISON



Proposed - FE Technologies Wand

These wands connect directly via Bluetooth to the tablet, which has a stronger antenna than the current wands. This minimizes the number of times they lose connection.

Durability is very good.

Staff performed a “drop test” and the wand did not break.

Battery cap is a standard cap not physically fused to the battery. Batteries are easily removed and recharged without compromising the physical integrity of the whole device.

Batteries for this device are generic. They can be purchased on Amazon and only cost about

\$30.00 per set. Since batteries are MUCH cheaper, back-up batteries are affordable for every wand. If a battery dies while the wand is being used, a quick swap out of batteries and the wand is ready to go without delay.

Scanning two bays in the collection:

- Found all 1,182 items in 12 minutes
- Found 6 items that needed processing
- Wand stayed connected

Checking 120 different items every day over 3- week pilot:

- Average time is 3 minutes (set-up time and connecting to the tablet takes 30 seconds)

Current - Blade Style Wand

These wands have a smaller, weaker antenna in the wands themselves and frequently lose connectivity.

Durability is low.

Wand handles have separated and are held together with book tape after less than 1 year of use.

Battery lock is attached to the battery. This holds the battery in by a flimsy plastic clip that easily breaks with daily use and is now held together with book tape. This part is not replaceable without buying a new battery.

The batteries are specific to the device and proprietary. The replacement cost is between

\$700-\$800. Due to the high cost of batteries, KDL only has one battery per device. If the wand dies during the workday, staff must wait until the next day for it to recharge to use it again.

Scanning two bays in the collection:

- Found 1,150 out of 1,182 items in 16 minutes
- Found 1 item that needed processing
- Wand disconnected twice

Timed testing was done in June 2021 for a month (removal of auto-check in chute):

- Average time is 11 minutes (set-up time and connecting to laptop takes up to 7 minutes)

TIME-SAVING BENEFITS IN ACTION

During the blizzard of November 2022, a staff member at Wyoming emptied the book drop containing 308 items on Friday evening and placed them on book trucks. Using the wand, they checked in all items in 7 minutes. Holds were pulled in a few minutes, items were sorted, and the total process was completed in less than 30 minutes. On Saturday, there were 327 items in the bin. The check-in time was just under 8 minutes, holds were pulled, and the total process was completed in less than 30 minutes, leaving these items ready to be shelved. On Sunday, when the branch reopened, staff were all able to cover the public service points and follow a normal daily routine without slugging through hours of check-ins beforehand.





PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS SUMMARY

- Staff will scan all the carts to be shelved before they go out onto the floor for a second check ensuring all items are checked in.
- Staff will scan the Hold Shelf and Branch Displays weekly to ensure that items which are set to anything but “hold shelf” or “display” (in transit, on shelf, or missing) will be identified and processed. Currently, this is done manually by staff and items still get missed.
- Each branch will scan their collection a minimum of once per month. Currently, this is only being done at a couple of branches, but not all.
- On busy or short-staffed days, focusing on customers is our priority. If the book drop gets backed up, staff will use the wand to check-in a cart of materials in a few minutes.
- Staff will use the wand to check in items before reopening the branch after being closed for weather or after a holiday closing.



FE Technologies

“FE Technologies builds relationships so that you can get in touch with someone who knows your problems and can tailor their support for what you need.”

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