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## Tulsa's Librarium a testing ground for new library tech systems

Tulsa's Librarium is a testing ground for new systems

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By NOUR HABIB World Staff Writer | 0 comments



Sheree Zumach loads books Friday into the automated book-return kiosk at the main entrance of the Librarium, a temporary library downtown at 11th Street and Denver Avenue in Tulsa. MICHAEL WYKE / Tulsa World

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Last year was a year of innovative ideas and technology upgrades at the Tulsa City-County Library system.

The biggest testing ground for the library's ideas was the Librarium, a temporary branch that opened downtown in September while Central Library undergoes a 2-year renovation.

"We're trying out all kinds of things at the Librarium," said library CEO Gary Shaffer.

Many of the experiments revolve around technology, including new automatic checkout machines that are easier to use than those located at other branches. The new machines allow library users to check out multiple books at a time. Shaffer said the library system plans to gradually roll out the new device to other branches.

An automatic book return machine is also being piloted at the Librarium, as well as at Broken Arrow Library. Books are dropped onto a conveyor belt, their radio-frequency ID tags are scanned and then they are sorted into bins based on whether they are staying at that library or going to another branch.

"It's very convenient for staff and customers," Shaffer said.

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The library is looking at installing a few more of the machines at high-volume branches, as well as a similar but bigger machine at the service center. Such technology helps the library with circulation, which Shaffer called a "large logistic operation." More than 6 million items were circulated throughout the system last year.

"It will allow us to deliver books in a more timely fashion," Shaffer said.

Another piece of technology that the library has decided to keep around are book lockers used to hold specialized items, such as research material, for customers. Shaffer said the lockers, which open up using the library card that put the item on hold, will be placed in the after-hours area planned for the newly remodeled Central Library, so patrons can access their materials even if the library is closed.

In terms of innovative ideas, Shaffer said the Librarium's 80/20 service model or designing a library that is easy enough to use that 80 percent of people can navigate it on their own, so library staff can assist the other 20 percent of people has worked well. The Librarium's division into easily identifiable "zones" has helped with the model, and Shaffer said the system is looking at implementing similar layouts at other branches.

Karen Brignac, who used Central Library frequently and now uses the Librarium, said she likes the model.

"I've begun to rely more on the electronic resources," she said, merely because the design of the library makes it convenient to do so.

Outside the Librarium, the library system rolled out several new services last year.

In October, the library began to offer free movie streaming. The movies are streamed through a service called Freegal, which the library also uses to offer free downloadable music. Movies are available for 48 hours and can be watched through an Internet browser or mobile app.

Also in 2013, the library began offering more digital access to magazines and newspapers. The latest issues of more than 125 magazines can now be downloaded for free using a library card, and more than 2,100 newspapers in 50 languages can be downloaded inside any library location.

An updated library mobile app is now also available in Spanish and offers new services such as the ability to scan book barcodes at any retailer and be directed to the library's record of the book.

"With the incredibly high use of smartphones today, Tulsa City-County Library recognizes we can reach customers and help them find information and entertainment beyond the walls of the libraries throughout Tulsa County," said Charlotte Frazier, deputy director of support services.

Shaffer said the library is always on the look out for "the latest and the greatest" to help it reach more people.


"We're always keeping an eye out toward the future so we can continue to offer more," he said.

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