Library Speeds Book Check-Out

BY CHARLES LANFORD
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Beginning with the first week in October, the circulation desk of the Fondren Library will be automated.

Mr. Fred Ruecking, library circulation head, said that borrowers “will no longer need to write out cards for each item. This will speed up the checking-out procedure from about one minute per item to about fifteen seconds per item.”

In place of the handwritten old method, the borrower merely will hand the attendant a plastic card which is coded to identify him. The IBM Data Collection System will read the card and check out the book to the borrower in about three seconds.

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Cards have already been prepared for the books, and the plastic borrowers' cards are now being distributed. Besides the speed advantage, the computerized system will allow the student to locate any book, whether it is in circulation or not.

By matching the code number of the book and the code number of the borrower, a student will be able to determine the name, address, and phone number of any borrower.

With no increase in personnel, the circulation department will take over the inter-library loans which are now handled in the science reference department. In addition, a staff member of the circulation division will be assigned to work at least part-time in the reference department.

IBM Bills Borrower

Since the computer system has poor renewal capabilities, any undergraduate will be allowed to keep a book for four weeks. If someone requests that the book be called in, the student will be sent a notice at the end of two weeks, which will serve as the first overdue notice.

After one week from the first overdue notice, he will receive a second overdue notice. If the borrower still does not return the book, a bill will be sent to the Cashier's Office two weeks later. The IBM system will make this notice system very efficient.

Costing some $26,000 to install, the machinery will cost about $5,500 per year to rent. Approximately four months were required to convert the library's 450,000 volumes to this system.

Second In Nation

Mr. Rueking said that had the library not automated, a staff increase of three full-time workers, costing from $8,000-$10,000 per year would have been necessary within the next three years.

IBM aided Mr. Rueking in designing the system for Rice. The Fondren Library will be the second library in the nation to be automated to such an extent.