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**The Practice of Automatic Identification. Ethnographic Case Studies on Ubiquitous Computing in Working Life (Ulf Ortmann)**

The term “ubiquitous computing” subsumes two developments in informatics: Firstly, availability of data and services becomes more and more mobile (smart phones, cloud computing, etc.). Secondly, countless tiny computers are increasingly embedded in everyday objects. RFID (“Radio Frequency Identification”) is a prominent example of such technology. Through RFID, physical objects are tagged with unique addresses and can be identified remotely. In contrary to the concept of internet-mediated “invisible assistants” the results of my ethnographic case studies in a library and a warehouse suggest that workers, employees and customers of the library are facing high challenges:

1. At first sight, RFID allows the identification of books and t-shirts to be done automatically. However, RFID machines require disciplined work that constantly has to be practiced, maintained, and controlled.
2. The interactivity of RFID-tagged objects is prone to interferences. The technology’s essential vagueness is an ongoing task of collective diagnosing and improvisation.
3. Although collective coordination and improvisation is a routine part of the work done with and by RFID, this work is done as “simple” work (in the case of the warehouse) or even unpaid work (in the case of customers of the library).

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