

# 36 Million Items Sorted Automatically



An advanced sortation and automation system recently helped a major UK retail chain to consolidate operations, reduce inventory levels and dramatically improve order lead times.

WH Smiths existing site in Swindon was built in 1967. In order to achieve the extra throughput required of a national distribution centre, significant extra capacity and automation was needed. Furthermore the system had to be installed with minimum disruption to the daily work of the distribution centre.

Cleco were appointed by WH Smith as systems integrators for the entire project. A 30,000 sq.ft mezzanine floor was installed above the existing work area and a TWIN SBIR sorter installed, capable of handling 60,000 items per hour.

The ground floor is now used for the batch picking of books and videos into totes. Automated conveyor and elevator systems send the loaded tote boxes up to the mezzanine floor and on to one of fifteen induct stations.

The totes are unloaded and individual items scanned into the sortation system. Books are automatically sorted by the system into one of over 600 chutes; each pre-allocated to a specific store order. Once a chute has a complete order, the system automatically advises an operative that it is ready for packing into a despatch tote.

Once packing is complete, the system confirms the order and prints labels together with a despatch note. The despatch totes are then sent by conveyor to the goods-out area, where they are automatically sorted by delivery destination.



The benefits of this system to WH Smith are enormous. Over 150,000 books are handled each day, with peak flow exceeding 200,000 units, whilst man hours have been reduced by 50%.

## WHSmith



### **AT A GLANCE**

#### **Industry**

High Street Retail

#### **Application**

Automated sortation of books and videos for despatch to high street branches

#### **Cleco Solution**

TWIN level sorter  
Tote Stack/Destack paternoster machines  
30,000 sq. ft mezzanine floor  
Warehouse Control System interface to host computer

#### **Facts & Figures**

15 induct stations  
600 output chutes  
36 million books/videos each year

**Customer Solutions**

**Worldwide key resource centres:** Cleco Systems Ltd., UK. Telephone: +44 (0)1858 436200. Io Systems Ltd., UK. Telephone: +44 (0)1858 436200  
Cleco Systems B.V., The Netherlands. Telephone: +31 (0)314 326699. Cleco Systems Inc., USA. Telephone: +1 770 795 9077.