

Harrow International School Beijing Eclipse Case Study

It's all new with ECLIPSE, but I can claim more 'newness' than most users –new library, new school, new country and now new version 2.2.19

In July of this year I sent a copy of Eclipse out across the Great Wall to China, to await my arrival in the library at Harrow International School Beijing. This is a new school that only opened its doors in August 2005 and is linked to the historic establishment in England and another international Harrow in Bangkok. Harrow on the Hill are also Eclipse users and I believe we are the first school in Beijing, if not China, to introduce this system.

So how is it going? And what have I done so far?

I found a basic library stock of about 2000 titles, which is growing rapidly, and after designing school book-plates (and having library furniture made locally – anyone know the Chinese for book-trolley?) I started classifying the books using the Dewey Decimal system and then accessioning onto Eclipse. Thank heavens for my willing team of label stickers and Magicat's bibliographical data, which matched a high proportion of titles. The label print

module produces barcode labels in-house. The current stock is nearly done now, so it will be a more manageable task to add new books as they arrive. I am also ordering and cataloguing all school textbooks so that they can be issued centrally through Eclipse.

The bulk of our purchases have to be shipped from the UK – think in terms of 8 week deliveries, plus additional costs and customs restrictions; but relationships between bureaucracy and publishing are improving rapidly. Some books, especially fiction, can be found locally.

So how has ECLIPSE been received?

The Network services team found it straightforward to install and kindly put all the membership details in for me, not sure if these were transferred from the school database, but it saved me struggling with the unfamiliar lexicology of Chinese and Korean names (many of which I still find unpronounceable).

“The pupils were very excited when ECLIPSE was launched at the beginning of the academic year and queued up eagerly to be “finger-printed” by Identikit, and staff weren't far behind!”



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Since the introduction of Identikit it has proved successful to use and, judging by the number of times students forget their registration swipe cards, it is much easier to remember to bring a 'finger' to the library.

I have just gone "LIVE" with SEARCHSTAR, as obviously this couldn't happen before the library was almost catalogued, and Year 7 are doing the worksheets this week. It is very easy to customize these to fit your individual school's demands and produce your own cover. These will be used for Years 8 and 9 as well and then different schemes more appropriate for Years 10 and 11 and the Sixth Formers. The library is too small to use the Floor Plan facility and of course the UK library sources are irrelevant. I intend to use book reviews in due course and add educational websites – all in good time, Rome wasn't built in a day and Beijing certainly wasn't!

Any 'Sino' difficulties?

Not really, although I did enlist my parent-assistant's help to translate the Chinese titles as my spoken Mandarin is limited to a few basic phrases and I haven't tried to master the characters yet.

Daily life can be fraught with difficulties and misunderstandings, one needs a high degree of patience and tolerance, but it certainly has many compensations. Need some plastic book display stands? No problem, we'll make you some; more computers for the library? We'll deliver them this week; someone to do the cleaning and ironing while you're at work? –sorted easily.

There are lots and lots of wonderful eating places – a different one for every night of the week – Sichuan, Cantonese, Peking Duck, Thai, Vietnamese and Tibetan to name but a few we've tried!

Talking to other librarians at international schools in Beijing it seems that many of us are new in post this term so we have established a local librarians' network (BJLN). Still very much in its infancy we hope it will become a flourishing support network, both professionally and socially, we can share ideas, maybe pool some resources and generally help each.

"Another colleague has already been over to see ECLIPSE in action. After all there is no point having a good thing and keeping it to oneself".



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“Libraries are also a testament to the human race, from the early scrolls of Alexandria to the digital records of today, and current school librarians working with the next generation are privileged to be custodians of information and ECLIPSE makes our task much easier.”

But what about the new version?

Certainly looks prettier, clearer and more colourful icons, probably more helpful to new users than an old hand like me.

I have only just done the update so can't comment yet on new features, but the development team are always ready to listen to their customers-after all we are the end-users. For example I pointed out that you couldn't reserve a book unless it had an ISBN, and some titles don't, and several other aspects have been 'tweaked' during the upgrades since ECLIPSE was first introduced.

Reports and statistics are easy to generate and invaluable for inspection and evaluation purposes, although as librarians we know that issue figures are only a small part of the daily service we offer, most of which is immeasurable.

That brings me to the final immeasurable item in this report – the Great Wall of China itself. This is truly a magnificent sight as it snakes across the mountains, originally started in the 5th century BC it has stood the ravages of time and stands as a testament to mankind's ingenuity.



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