

Loughborough High School Eclipse Case Study

“Loughborough High School is an independent girls’ school, with 605 students, aged 11-18.”

It was founded in 1850 and is therefore certainly one of the earliest, if not the first, girls’ Grammar schools. I came to the school in 1995 when the boarding facilities were phased out and it was decided to convert the boarding areas into a bigger school library. Once the building alterations were done, shelving in place and carpets down it was time to undertake the mammoth task of moving all the book-stock from two separate sites into their new home. At this time, the old Browne ticket system was in place, but a computer system was part of the re-organisation plan. The school had an Acorn network and so it was decided that a compatible library system would be best. The librarian and Head of ICT went to look at MLS in action and it was installed in 1996.

As a solo professional librarian it took nearly 18 months to painstakingly enter every title onto MLS, especially as I was checking all the stock as I went, and running the library at the same time. But eventually it was done, Lib-Search made the catalogue available across the network and library housekeeping and statistics were revolutionised. But gradually the school moved over to PCs and Windows applications and it became obvious that the library

system also needed upgrading. At first I was reluctant to change, as I was more than satisfied with MLS and familiar with all the features. I briefly considered Alice, which is used by our brother school Loughborough Grammar, but could see no real advantage in this and I was also keen to see Eclipse that had been developed by MLS. I could see more benefits in staying with the organisation I knew, especially as the Helpdesk service is first-rate, whether the problem is large, small, or in my case usually extremely trivial, their response is always courteous and professional.

However the deciding factor was ‘Identikit’, an exciting innovation that Loughborough High school wanted to be part of and I think we were the first school in the County to install. (It must be our historical ‘ethos’ to strive to be first in events or achievements). The change-over went extremely smoothly one day in June 2002 and the data transferred across effortlessly. The training was first class and I felt confident using the system straightaway, although after the long summer break I was a bit rusty at first and gradually learnt about different features as I needed them. The students were very excited about using ‘Identikit’ and it still evokes much interest with visitors coming round the school. One feature that causes some surprise and embarrassment is if a user visits the library on her birthday and the computer flashes the fact on screen!

The friendly nature of registering with ‘Identikit’ and ‘smiley thumbs’ is also much appreciated by the nervous new girls when they come to the school for their induction day. (A letter is sent to the parents explaining the biometric recognition system, avoiding the phrase ‘finger-printing’). Self-Issue is on the system, although only used occasionally in the librarian’s absence, but is straightforward to understand, and re-assuring to have in place as a standby.

I am certainly happy to recommend Eclipse as a library system and willing to show it to any school librarian considering its purchase and our Prep school now runs the Junior version.

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