

Queen Elizabeth's School Eclipse Case Study

Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Alford is a Foundation status selective school founded in 1566. We cater for pupils aged 11-18 and recently gained Business & Enterprise College status. We have approximately 550 pupils on role.

When I was appointed to the Library Officer's post in August 2004 the school was using Heritage with a shared support network with a group of schools, for which a reduced support fee was paid. My predecessor had been the technical support link for this group. I had previously worked at Skegness Grammar School who had an old management system and failing hardware and after much research into library management systems, (both features and cost) decided to go for Eclipse and found the transfer, system and support excellent during the time I used it there. I had also previously used Sims and Alice (after transferring purely on cost because of the large discount for Sims users) at a previous librarian's job in Middlesbrough so had experience of a few systems.

My first day at Alford was in the summer holidays, arranged so that I could acquaint myself with the library and management system. I consider myself to be competent with ICT but was horrified when presented with a huge

yellow A4 lever arch folder containing 'the instruction manual' for Heritage, which I would describe as 'techno babble'. It didn't help when the ICT manager described it as one of the worst written manuals he had ever seen! You will have gathered from this that things didn't go to plan and despite numerous lengthy calls to colleagues who also had Heritage, faxes to try to show what should be on the screen (and wasn't) I became increasingly worried as term time approached (having taken the manual to bed to read every night), I was still unable to globally change year groups and add the new year seven. I did ring Heritage a couple of times and explained my predicament but was told that until the group had a new support liaison in place they could not help me. Their only suggestion was if I were prepared to host a training day, in return I would receive training on the system. Of course that was no use to me at the time.

Further to this I enquired about a fines module (included as standard with Eclipse) to be told this was £500! When the Head Teacher heard of the problems I was having with the system a brief discussion resulted in me being asked to research a new system and after presenting information on features and price and my previous experiences we decided to go with MLS.

By the time the decision to move had been made it was very close to the start of term (September 2004). The team at MLS were aware of this and couldn't have been more helpful in organising the smooth transition from Heritage.



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“A short phone call to our ICT department gave our technicians the details MLS needed, and these were saved to disk and sent off. Although busy, the transferred data duly arrived back in just over a week and the information loaded onto my computer.”

The records had transferred successfully, the only very minor thing being that some fields are so different in Heritage or don't exist that minor adaptations were necessary once the system was up and running. However with the global change facilities this was a simple process. With the pupils imported from Integris our admin system I was up and running in time for the first year seven library lesson.

The whole process of purchasing was straightforward, assisted by the fact that everyone knew what they were talking about. The price was very competitive and the documentation and manual straightforward and informative. Having used the system before I was able to work on it straight away but when I purchased the system for Skegness Grammar I picked the system up very quickly from the manual and hands on use without any training, so if money were tight I would say that is a cost that could easily be saved. Although we didn't use it, I think the fact that it can be bought on E-learning credits is advantageous

The ICT technicians at school here have had no problems when dealing with MLS. They have very little to do as any minor problem is normally sorted out between the Helpdesk staff and myself without the need for them to get involved. Any other technical query has been sorted out promptly and the technicians at MLS seem more than happy to advise. (I would say that it is advisable to have the support of your own ICT technical staff from the start to ease the process and discover what is needed in terms of hardware and any possible software conflicts early in the process, this will aid the smooth running later on).

Our staff that have used the system are impressed with its features and ease of use. I have set up accounts for the English department and given them brief training so that in the event of me being out of the library when they are in with an English group they can issue & return resources and take money for fines if necessary.

The pupils and parents seem to be the most impressed. Open evenings are a great time to showcase the system, the wow factor of the Identikit biometric system and webcam cannot be stressed enough as well as the practical advantages of these. Of course my pupil librarians love the system and find it easy to use from year seven upwards.

“You know you are onto a winner when even upper school pupils, male and female are dragging their mates into the library be ‘done on the finger thingy’!”



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We have 252 networked computers throughout school, 7 in the library and all but a few have Eclipse SearchStar on them. (It is worth mentioning here that Heritage was only licensed for one machine and Eclipse includes a site licence) We are running on Windows and most of the computers are XP Pro edition. I teach a basic package to years seven and eight on SearchStar and MLSLibraries.net which is popular with pupils and English staff as it combines book review writing, ICT and search skills in KS3 curriculum. Of course it also promotes the library. We purchased the main package and Identikit. Also label print.

Firstly, I would and have recommended the software to others. Two schools have visited and purchased the system based on what they have seen and a third is coming soon. When seen, I believe the system sells itself. However if I had to give reasons I would include the following: It is visually appealing, user friendly and designed with school libraries in mind. The features are wide ranging and there is so much customisation available that it can be adapted to suit most circumstances.

Knowledgeable, friendly and helpful staff supports the whole package. I have never had to wait more than a couple of minutes to get through to the Helpdesk and if someone says they will get back to you, they do! I cannot think of anything that I would like the software to do that it does not do already.

My loans have increased since the introduction of Identikit and the problems caused by lost & loaned reader cards dispensed with.

The profile of the library has been greatly increased with pupils, staff and parents. On open days the MLSLibraries.net was well received by parents who discovered their child and they could access the library catalogue from home.

Label print has been a great buy and will be cost effective very quickly as I no longer have to buy and barcodes or make library cards. My books look much more professional on the shelves as the software also prints customised spine labels.

The pupils are encouraged to be much more proactive in their use of the library. SearchStar and the personalised library map have been a big reason for this.

Overall my job is easier, routine library housekeeping, reporting etc is sorted out by the software so rather than spend hours on administration this leaves me to engage with the pupils and promote the library and reading.



Librarian
Queen Elizabeth's School