

CASE STUDY: City of Bristol College

## Partnering for success

*City of Bristol College was formed initially by the merger of Brunel College with South Bristol College, latterly merging with Soundwell College, the College of Care and Early Years Education and other small institutions; and is now one of the largest further and higher education colleges in the UK, with an enrollment of over 50,000. Supporting students at the college are 45 staff at 7 Learning Resource Centres (LRCs), which are located at college sites across the city. The LRCs contain over 70,000 books and DVDs as well as journals, computers, multi-media computers, audio-visual materials, CD-ROMs and a range of open and flexible learning materials.*

### Situation

The incumbent library management solution had been in use at the college for a number of years, when in 2006, it became apparent to LRC management that they were the only further education college in the country using the system.

Ongoing development of the system was clearly targeted at the large number of public library customers, whilst developments more appropriate to City of Bristol College and the wider further education market were being passed over due to the lack of demand amongst the customer base as a whole.

***“We were keen to ensure that the chosen system could offer us the flexibility to meet our specific needs. It was clear ...that OLIB was highly configurable so that we could make it our OLIB”***

Lee Bryant, LRC manager

### Solution

In July 2006, the decision was taken to replace the current solution with one more suited to a further and higher education college of their scale. A thorough selection process then followed, which involved detailed internal and external consultation to ensure that a library management system which not only met their needs, but which was also widely adopted within the sector, was selected.

#### AT A GLANCE

- Bristol City College – one of the largest FE & HE colleges in the UK.
- Over 45 staff support students across 7 Learning Resource Centres.
- Requirement for an established, flexible Library Management System used by colleges of a similar scale.
- Importance of User Group involvement in deciding future product direction.
- Configuration features to be used to meet specific user requirements.



The external consultation phase included contact with CILIP's COFHE (Colleges Of Further and Higher Education) group to obtain details of systems in use in colleges, as well as telephone interviews with the 'Top Ten' colleges to obtain feedback on library management solutions. Internal consultation focused on canvassing staff opinion to ensure that the final requirements specification adequately reflected every day requirements of LRC staff.

These consultations proved extremely useful in enabling the college to produce an excellent requirements specification that could then be sent to a small number of carefully selected suppliers. However it was the on-site demonstrations and reference site visits that followed, that proved key to the final decision.

OCLC's partnership approach to ongoing development of the OLIB solution was also deemed important in the final decision. OLIB has an active User Group which works closely with the OLIB Product Manager in defining priorities for new releases which are presented at regular meetings and at the annual OLIB User Conference. The opportunity to mix with other colleges in deciding future product direction was something not previously available to City of Bristol, so OLIB's track record in this area was highly attractive.

### Result

The OLIB implementation went live in August 2007. in time for the new academic year. The carefully managed implementation has ensured a smooth transition and was an opportunity for staff at the LRCs to re-think some of the current procedures and workflows.

Plans are now underway to further utilise the configurability of OLIB to make maximum use of the system and its features. With a fully Web-based version of the system due for release, City of Bristol College are looking forward to a long-term relationship with OCLC and the OLIB solution.

For more information on OLIB and the benefits it can offer your library visit [www.oclc.org](http://www.oclc.org) or email [uk@oclc.org](mailto:uk@oclc.org).