



### About the College

Wirral Metropolitan College is a large FEI of some 3,500 Full Time Equivalents operating across 3 main sites on the Wirral peninsular. The college's catchment area encompasses pockets of considerable prosperity, alongside some of the most economically and socially deprived wards in Britain. The college intake ranges from large numbers of 16-19s undertaking entry and first level two qualifications, to 550 HEFC funded students studying to degree level. The college has recently invested £12m in a new campus at Twelve Quays in docklands, and in common with other FEIs has major plans to further redevelop and consolidate its infrastructure to the latest standards.





## Background

The LRC operates out of two main sites and a smaller service point, and due to space constraints, provides the only true open-access computer facilities in the college for students, numbering 75 desktops and 20 laptops across all sites. The PCs in the LRCs are the most intensively-used in college, confirmed by RM auditor data. College managers are very aware that space is an issue, and the college estates strategy plans substantial rebuilding of the infrastructure to improve facilities to sector norms.

The combination of very high demand on a finite resource creates particular challenges for the LRC team. In the 08/9 customer survey, 20% of students stated that the thing they liked least about the LRC was not being able to get on to a computer, and in the "suggestions for improvement", 30% of students asked for more computers. The LRC team have been struggling to manage issues of students using the LRC as a social space/cyber cafe because there is little other social space on campus, and teaching staff using the LRC as a quick solution to not being able to book IT rooms. This has impacted on true "open access" provision for individual work and study.

## The Selection of MyPC Booking System

The LRC team were aware of MyPC from contact with users both locally and nationally, facilitated by the Circle of Merseyside College Librarians and CoFHE. A precondition for any time-management solution was compatibility with RM networks. Following demonstrations from two suppliers, and various visits and soundings, the decision was made to implement MyPC from August 2009.

## Results and Reactions

ITS provided truly exemplary support and guidance on the setup of the system from the beginning, talking us through the options and demonstrating considerable knowledge and experience of the real-world issues involved. We opted for up to 8 logins a day and four hours per student.

We anticipated an initial backlash from staff and students, but in the event this has not materialised. Comments to date have come mainly from staff concerned at time allocations, and losing the ability to use the LRC in lieu of a computer room, but this was never our role. Students queued initially, but the vast majority are now using the system happily, and we now have an additional kiosk for busy periods. Part-time students value the ability to book PCs from home.

A small number of students do walk away, but they are generally not intent on serious work. We have emphasised the message to students and staff that we will never refuse to extend computer time for anyone who is genuinely working.

Above all, the atmosphere in our LRCs is much calmer and more purposive, and students have praised the system in their Representative Council meeting. As an LRC team we are delighted with the change to a more studious atmosphere, which supports retention and achievement and the college's core mission. Misuse of PCs for games and the like has also fallen markedly.

We regard MyPC as the best purchase we have made in years, and wish we had done it sooner. We would recommend the system to anyone wanting to put the "learning" back in their learning resource centre.

**This case study was written by Steve Cropper, Learning Resources Manager, Wirral Metropolitan College**

**Designed by ITS Marketing Department**

***"We regard MyPC as the best purchase we have made in years, and wish we had done it sooner. We would recommend the system to anyone wanting to put the "learning" back in their learning resource centre."***

***"ITS provided truly exemplary support and guidance on the setup of the system from the beginning, talking us through the options and demonstrating considerable knowledge and experience of the real-world issues involved."***



© Copyright ITS Ltd. 2009