



# iBorrow

laptop borrowing scheme

## **Easier Than Borrowing a Book** (External Evaluation – Executive Summary)

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**JISC**

**ucisa**  
Award for Excellence  
Winner 2009

 **Canterbury  
Christ Church  
University**

## Executive Summary

The JISC funded iBorrow project, based at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU), has attempted something new in the provision of IT for students, and achieved all of its main aims successfully, on time and on budget. Its success has been recognised nationally, having already won one award, and being short listed for another.

The project aimed to enable users of its brand new £35m library and student support centre, Augustine House - first opened for the 2009 Autumn term - to borrow a notebook computer as easily as picking a book from a shelf. It provides a large-scale demonstration of how thin-client notebooks can enable an HEI to provide 'no fuss' access to a range of software and learning resources on mobile devices. The use of location-awareness technology, linked to student data, can additionally provide management information and inform the configuration of resources within large flexible learning spaces.

### The Project in Bullet Points (Numbers in brackets refer to sections in the full report)

- The project is the first in HE successfully to introduce on a large scale, self-service thin client notebooks on loan for student use.
- The central, technical core of the project delivered on time, ready for the 2009 Autumn term opening of Augustine House, despite a number of time pressures on members of the technical team due to unforeseeable circumstances. (4.1)
- By concentrating on usability, for instance by providing a core suite of applications including access to social network sites, and reducing notebook start-up time to a minimum, the project has successfully anticipated the major student user needs. (4.2)
- The wireless network delivers services to the client laptops in accordance with the project's design specification. The location technology also works within the manufacturer's specifications, and can successfully locate users within Augustine House's learning zones. (4.3)
- The project has been well managed. Its management structure was deliberately broad-based, and the project worked closely to CCCU's adopted PRINCE2 approach to project management. This ensured that line managers were fully involved with decision-making, and setting and reaching project milestones. Management 'tools', especially the Gantt chart and Risk register, were used well to benefit the running of the project. (7)
- Co-ordination of the availability of iBorrow laptops with the opening of Augustine House was successfully achieved. This was a significant achievement given that there could have been delays on either side – in the project, or in progress with the building. (4 & 4.1 – 4.3)
- An unexpected problem with security at the Augustine House entrances was dealt with positively, and as swiftly as commercial partners could manage. The decision to make the notebooks available without absolute guarantees as to their security was courageous, and proved correct. (7)
- The availability of 'on loan' notebooks has been shown to be a clear success by large scale student uptake. At peak times all notebooks are in use. Losses to service

because of breakdown, theft, etc, have been too small to cause concern. (1 & 5.3)

- Pedagogic investigations gathered data from staff and students, benchmarking experiences in the old library. After the building opened, the problems with entrance security, mentioned above, allowed the collection of additional observational data on ICT usage in Augustine House before the iBorrow notebooks were available for students. This was excellent exploitation of an unexpected opportunity. (5.1 – 5.3)
- Data is provided via the notebook wireless network, using location tracking software, on the numbers, time and duration of use and location of the notebooks. Combined with suitably anonymous student-related data, a picture is being obtained of the patterns of student use of the ICT facilities available within different zones in Augustine House. Additional data from observation and student interviews, in the Spring of 2010, reported on user satisfaction with the system, and is informing the analysis of a variety of 'learning scenarios' that the project has developed. (6)

### **Considerations for prospective data gatherers (8)**

Secure handling of sensitive data was a major consideration in the iBorrow project, and will be in any similar project that follows the iBorrow path. Discussion of the associated issues occupied much project time, before agreed positions were reached. Requests for personally sensitive data need to be considered in the light of both ethical concerns and the laws of data protection. That being so, proposals to ethics committees, and the designated data protection personnel, should probably routinely include consideration of appropriate procedures and protocols to ensure the secure handling of such data. It is wise to launch all this as early as possible, as the iBorrow project did.

Although the iBorrow project is ending, there is a continuing need to monitor how students respond to, and use, the spaces and ICT facilities in Augustine House. Experiences on the iBorrow project identified opportunities for closer co-operation in data gathering that remain to be exploited to avoid deluging students and staff with requests for information. So there is an opportunity for the various management interest groups to co-operate, e.g. in the organisation of student focus groups, and the co-operative design of student/staff questionnaires.

### **Looking Forward**

JISC has funded iBorrow to conduct an additional 'value for money' study to compare the iBorrow model with others in HE. This is due out in Summer 2010. (10)

The iBorrow project is collaborating with the Sheffield University based WeCAMP project. iBorrow is making anonymous data from its tracking system available so that the WeCAMP team can use it to demonstrate the display of space utilisation within 3-D campus models. (9 & 10)

Exploration of the best ways to summarise and use data from the network tracking system for management purposes continues. The iBorrow notebooks have not yet been available for a full academic year, and the pattern of usage across a whole year may well produce surprises. (8 & 10)

The very success of the project has produced pressures for further developments. The project has already twice increased the number of its network servers, but demand

continues to grow, and students now want to be able to roam Augustine House while using a notebook, without risking a loss of connection. And the search for suitable replacement notebooks has begun. (10)