

A Lindenhouse Case Study

London South Bank University (London SE1)



It was in 1970 that the Borough Polytechnic Institute, established way back in 1892, merged with four other colleges to become the South Bank Polytechnic. In its centenary year of 1992, the expanded polytechnic was granted university status and now, as London South Bank University (LSBU), it has some 18,000 students.

The university aims to deliver excellence in vocational and applied subjects and it maintains close links with specialist industrial and professional organisations. This strategy of equipping students for real jobs in the workplace has helped to ensure the popularity of LSBU. Official figures show that applications for places there rose by 28% between 2004 and 2006, compared with 5.8% for UK universities as a whole.

As LSBU's mission statement sets out: **"Our primary focus is on our students. Our mission is to provide them with a rich and diverse range of academic programmes, underpinned and informed by relevant research. We do this within a supportive environment which celebrates the diversity of our community and which enables our students to develop both academically and personally during their university careers."**

A progressive institution with 18,000 students inevitably generates huge volumes of records, some of which must be retained for a number of years. This reality led LSBU management to investigate ways to streamline record-keeping in order to save space and resources, at the same time ensuring that statutory requirements on record retention and accessibility would be met.

LSBU has a corporate procurement unit that handles spending of around £35m per annum and its procurement policy is intentionally demanding. It seeks 'to deliver excellence in procurement practice, operational effectiveness, improved services and demonstrable savings'. So when LSBU went shopping for a document management system, it was determined to achieve efficiency benefits and value for money.

The origins and Inner London location of LSBU mean that its does not operate from one site. So records held at one building may need to be accessed by staff at another. Storing and accessing records was becoming an increasing problem when Jonathan Tanner, Faculty Manager for Business, Computing and Information Management, began investigating the electronic document management (EDM) solutions potentially available to the university.

Jonathan had heard through some of his academic contacts that Invu was becoming a document management system of choice within the education sector, which backed up his own experience during previous appointments in academia. LSBU identified the medium-term need for a site-wide EDM solution but was conscious that involvement of various sub-committees and steering groups could hinder progress towards implementation. Discussions with Invu's largest provider Lindenhouse led to formulation of a pilot scheme that would facilitate swift, low-cost implementation in one area with a view to scaling up later to as many as 2,000 users across the entire LSBU campus.

"We looked at the areas in which the Invu pilot scheme could

operate," Jonathan Tanner recalls, **"and decided that the rapidly approaching 2006 enrolment season would present a demanding, relevant and time-critical scenario. So, with just six weeks to go to the upcoming enrolment rush, we took the opportunity to put the Lindenhouse team's solution and implementation skills to the test in our Student Administration Department.**

"We use the QLS student records system to manage student details and courses. As this is the primary database used across all faculties of LSBU, it was vital that the Invu system could be linked in with it to provide a single point of reference. Lindenhouse satisfied us that they had the expertise to create a seamless link between the two systems to reduce the need for separate referencing of documents in a second database."

On installing the Invu system, Lindenhouse also built in a web-based interface (browser) to provide access to the stored documents around the various LSBU premises. Information such as course details can thereby be accessed wherever the tutors need it, which may be in a different building. Both time and efficiency improvements have been derived from this reduced need for staff to visit the Student Administration Department.

"Our experience of dealing with Lindenhouse before, during and since implementation of the pilot scheme, including staff training, has been excellent. Of course there have been the usual bedding-in issues that occur with a new software system but Lindenhouse have either been available on the phone, over the web or have come in person to resolve things - quickly. I have found the support staff to be very knowledgeable and they have worked well with our in-house IT helpdesk team.

"The practical and financial benefits already accruing or expected to accrue include saved space and speed of access to documents. We are currently scanning our application and enrolment forms, which need to be accessed regularly. It is interesting to see staff trying to find the paper documents before they are scanned and then show how easy it is to do the same electronically. The system sells itself to staff who might otherwise be reticent to take up a new software system.

"The response of our academic staff to the system has been very interesting. Initially it was thought that the system would be focused on improving our access to student records but after demonstrating the system to our academic staff they have come up with a number of interesting proposals, for example storing research papers and making these more easily accessible across teams. We may also look at how we can merge the system with a system such as SharePoint."

The various LSBU faculties have been showing considerable interest in the Student Administration Department's experience of Invu. In addition to that, use for process-driven document management within LSBU's Finance Department is also under consideration. Projects for researching course content material through the system's advanced textual searching capability are also being investigated.

About Lindenhouse

Lindenhouse provides quality IT products and services to a wide range of clients. The company is focused on document management solution provision and develops bespoke software to provide integration to all insurance and financial services back-office systems and to practice management systems in both the Accountancy and Legal sectors. Lindenhouse have installed 1700 document management systems to date and are rightly proud that it retains 95% of its support contracts – a testimony to the dedication and professionalism of the company's technical staff and help desk.

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