

A Lindenhouse Case Study

Oundle School (Northamptonshire)



Founded in 1556, Oundle School is an independent, co-educational boarding and day school with 1075 pupils. It is situated near Peterborough, England, about eighty miles north of London, in the small and attractive market town of Oundle. Famous Old Oundelians include the evolutionary biologist, Professor Richard Dawkins; the eminent ornithologist and artist, Sir Peter Scott; comedian, Arthur Marshall; captain of industry, Howard Stringer and Iron Maiden vocalist, Bruce Dickinson. Next year, the school will celebrate its 450th anniversary, in anticipation of which it is organizing a number of fund-raising activities (more details of which can be found on the school website at www.oundleschool.org.uk).

Stephen Forge has been head of Archives at Oundle School since 1999. In this role, his responsibility is to keep copies of all publications by the school or relevant to the School, all images and photos of the School and its pupils, ephemera such as old programmes and letters relating to pupils and biographical details of Old Oundelians. The Archive's prize possession is the oldest school register in the country which is in Latin and dates back to 1626.

With 450 years of history to cover and a very large number of Old Oundelians to support, the Oundle School archives are extensive and there are many demands on the time and expertise of Stephen and his two assistants. The kinds of requests they deal with might range from a person wanting a photograph of their rowing eight or rugby team from 40 years ago to people indulging in the current trend for researching their genealogy and wanting to know all about a distant relative's schooldays.

Amazingly, all of this information is at Stephen's fingertips in an instant – thanks to Oundle School's investment, four years ago, in a top class document management system called INVU from Lindenhouse.

"Under normal circumstances, I wouldn't describe myself as a technology-driven person," says Mr Forge. **"But this system has revolutionized the way we operate. I don't think I could function without our superb document management system which is absolutely invaluable to the whole archive team. If someone requests a photograph, we can retrieve it, print off a high quality copy and post or e-mail it to them instantly.**

"We are able to keep very extensive records and retrieve them

on demand in about a tenth of the time that it would have taken us if we still had our paper-based system. For example, we have got every single school magazine from the 1870s onwards scanned electronically and filed. I can search this entire file looking for a specific word or name. Consequently, if I get a request from a journalist wanting to know more about Professor Dawkins' schooldays, I can find every mention of him in the archive in just a few seconds. Previously, this line of enquiry would have taken between 2-3 hours."

Mr Forge's reliance on the INVU document management system from Lindenhouse is something that he has in common with administrative staff from some of the most dynamic and profitable businesses in the UK. So how did he come by the system?

"I asked one of my colleagues to research document management systems and, on review, we selected Lindenhouse because theirs seemed the easiest to use and most flexible – but at the same time the most affordable! When Lindenhouse came and presented the system to us, we could immediately see its potential. We (quite rightly) calculated that the initial outlay would soon be recouped by time savings and by providing a better service to Old Oundelians – the kind of service that might encourage them to dig a little deeper in their pockets when we are fundraising.

"Since installing the system, we haven't looked back. Sometimes there are small glitches, but the Lindenhouse helpdesk can usually sort us out remotely. When I attend The School Archivists' Conference and speak to others, I am amazed that the majority don't seem to have similar systems yet!"

Also, as more stringent Freedom of Information and Data Protection requirements force schools to keep pupil records for longer periods, Mr Forge believes that Independent Schools will be required to appoint Data Information Managers (such as exist in other industries) to manage the extensive paperwork.

"Anyone in such a position would be an obvious candidate for a document management system like ours," he says. **"It's like the difference between typesetting a book using individual lead letters and using a word processor. For us, it has proven as revolutionary as the invention of the printing press."**

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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INVU