

LMS Changeover Hints: A Compilation Piece

Prompt statements

- What I wish we had thought about before
- What was the best thing we did to facilitate a smooth changeover?

Three experienced teacher-librarians share their views.

Chris Lean

We have changed our library management software twice since I have been at Christian College. Both times it has been to achieve a specific goal.

1. To separate the database into four campus holdings so that they can be cleaned up (Winnebago to eLibrary which morphed into vLibrary)
2. To amalgamate them in a system that allowed the campus holdings to be managed in the same database with some autonomy (vLibrary to Access-It)

Here are some of my thoughts re this process:

1. Create a list of what your current system does not do that you need in a new system
2. Identify systems that will do these things
3. Locate schools who are willing for you to visit to ask questions and see the system in operation.
4. Arrange a demonstration from the manufacturers.
5. Involve you IT technicians to ensure that the system is compatible with school management system, video management system, email system.

Some ideas to consider

Consider the design of the software that you choose. Databases have a basic architecture that enables them to manipulate data. Some databases are very linear whilst others much more adaptable. Think about all the operations you will need to do every day prior to the manufacturer's demonstration.

- Cost should not be your main deciding factor when you are investigating systems (it will be anyway when you finally choose). However, factor in the ongoing cost of upgrades. This is an ongoing source of frustration with a library system.
- Finally recognise support as very important and your ability to have a say about the development of the system.

Chris Lean

**Head of LITEhouse – Resource Management
Middle School – Highton
Christian College Geelong**

Maureen O'Loughlin

A common response to the mere mention of changing Library Management System (LMS) is for people to go running from the room screaming! However, inevitably at some point in your career it will need to be tackled – or you will be left lagging behind! A couple of tips for the brave souls contemplating this process:

- Thoroughly research your options
- Tidy your database BEFORE the changeover occurs

- Organise one on one assistance from the provider AFTER the changeover is complete, to enable changes/improvements being activated on the live system
- Choose an appropriate time frame on the school calendar

Good luck!

Maureen O'Loughlin
Library Manager
Mercy Regional College
Camperdown, Victoria

Ian Thornton

What are the pitfalls and what to be aware of; as one proceeds:

- Think carefully before beginning to look at what system you require, ask the question –
 - Why am I replacing the current LMS?
 - How do I see the LMS adding to the College curriculum; pedagogy, teaching style of the school?
 - What user interface do I want for students and staff?
 - What changes do I wish to accomplish with my new LMS and where do I want to be in five years' time?
- Research LMS in the light of your budget, draw up a list of six (max.) and construct a concise list of three for consideration.
- Before organising vendor displays construct an extensive list of questions for the vendor and function tests on your prospective LMS.
- Once decided and approved allow time for implementation - do not rush, hold back and make sure all data is transferred correctly and staff are fully trained before going 'live'.
- Check 'back up' from vendor when reviewing the system and make sure vendor (by speaking to existing clients) honour their pledged level of service.
- If the system is used extensively in public, corporate and academic libraries, review parameters to see how compatible they are with schools and how accommodating they are with school specifics (loan parameters and age level collections)
- Is there a User's Group, if yes, are they effective in working collaboratively with the vendor?
- In depth capability, check out the extended functionality of the system, what can the system do for me and my school way beyond the general functions.
- Capable staff, upskill a key member of staff who shows strong technical capability to develop the functionality of the LMS to benefit your community.

Ian Thornton
Head of Library – Senior Campus
Brennan Library
Xavier College, Kew