

University of the West
of England

Media Resources Dept

connect2 + checkout

case study of connect2 + checkout

In our case study with the University of the West of England, Media Resources Department, we speak to Janet Mills (Media Resources Co-ordinator) and Paul Jones (Technical Resources Co-ordinator), about using connect2 and the checkout module to manage their Media Centre resources.

The study looks at how connect2 is now looking after 300 pieces of portable equipment and the benefits that have arisen since its implementation.

background

"Having used a very old system that had been custom designed for us over 10 years ago, we were finding that the software was far too basic and didn't fulfil the ever increasing demands that we had for our equipment.

We were finding it almost impossible to manage multiple bookings and processes were complicated and manual. We decided to begin a search for a new solution that would make our department more efficient for both our students and members of staff."

what we were looking for

With our old system we were finding it almost impossible to book multiple items, which was proving a real problem with third year students who were at production level.

We were also finding it time consuming to manually check permission levels on what students were allowed to book and found it difficult to keep track of overdue kit. Both these tasks were easily overlooked during busy times in addition to the software needing to be updated each academic year which in itself was a slow and tiresome task.

These issues formed the basis of our search for a new system, with our main objective being to solve them!

After some research on the internet and a demo of a competitor product, we then had a demo from lorensbergs. To ensure that all needs were met, the Resource and Technical Resource Co-ordinators plus the Technical Instructors and Department Manager were all involved in the discussions.



ebooking

at its best

the demo and installation

"This piece of software did it all and looked ideal."

Two representatives from lorenbergs walked us through the features of connect2, being very patient with our constant and demanding questions. We were extremely impressed the product and with their knowledge and professionalism, which still remains today.

Although connect2 was very much wanted after we had had the demo, we were unable to purchase at the time due to budgets. However after submitting a business case to senior management some time later, we were granted funding and an installation was arranged.

Richard Terry, lorenbergs' technical representative, worked with our IT Services to install connect2 over a two day period. It took a few hours longer than initially expected, which unfortunately reduced our set-up and training time. However, the technical support we received after installation to complete this was amazing. We would strongly advise any set up to be over the summer, or long break without any students/clients.



using connect2

connect2 is currently used to manage the media centre resources. This includes portable media equipment; cameras, sound recorders, lights, grips, batteries etc. We have around 300 portable items which are managed; booked, issued and tracked using the software. There are over 2000 students with the potential to borrow our resources from us and they each have an 'account' to which permissions are set depending on workshop attendance.

We additionally have a number of facilities on site, in the media centre and in another building on the same campus for animation facilities, which connect2 is used to manage the bookings for.

the benefits for staff

For media centre staff/counter staff connect2 has made a massive difference. We love the bar coding of items that the checkout module facilitates, and we deliberately chose to be able to create our own bar codes to keep the coding simple.

"It's difficult to remember how we managed with the old system! It has revolutionised the smoothness and time on the issue desk, and I hope significantly improved the student experience."

We also really like the parent-child facility, which means that we can check that really small, but valuable items like P2 cards, go with their respective camera. Following advice from our friends at Falmouth University, we kept this simple and didn't over complicate this.

We really like that the system is web based and doesn't need backing up by us every night as we used to do with our old system and it doesn't take up memory space on the desk computer.

Due to the new system being that much more thorough, it is now far more feasible to have multiple counter staff. Cover staff or part timers can come in, create and issue bookings under their own username, and have counter staff accounts.



the benefits for students

We rolled out online bookings from the first day of term when we began using the new system, and we gave students short inductions on where to find the site and how to book equipment.

We set up booking limits because we knew that some students would book out everything, all the time, however we found this restricting for final year students who need a larger selection of production kits for longer periods of time.

We find that some of these students still prefer to make their bookings for kit face-to-face, where we will make bookings on their behalf using connect2. With all information centralised, this is never a problem.

We ran a survey this June and found that the self-service booking capability has worked very well for animation students who book workstations and who aren't located in our building. For media practice students, the issues raised above meant they still preferred making bookings via our staff.



favourite features

We like the 'shopping list' feature where you can keep adding items and then check availability. This is the one key and most significant advantage over our previous system. You are able to see which items are booked and which are free, and the student can then decide whether they want to either change the dates to get the kit they want, or if they can manage without a specific item.

"If anyone was thinking about purchasing connect2, I would say that if they are working in a similar environment then this is a great piece of software."

We also like that the system connects to our main student database, where we are working towards a seamless flow of updated information to avoid a mass data input in September after registration.

the future

We run a very large number of workshops, which can be up to 15-20 a week in a busy period and entering in workshop attendance, although is essential, is time consuming and tedious! We are hoping to find ways of improving this element along with a more enhanced method of entering student booking permissions. We are also addressing the need to get connect2 integrated into our main university website to help students find the booking screen quicker.

With thanks to Janet Mills, Media Resources Co-ordinator
and Paul Jones, Technical Resources Co-ordinator



For more information on how connect2 could work for your organisation, give us a call on 01992 415500 or email enquiries@lorensbergs.com