

## Project report: September 2005 - December 2005

This report summarises the first stages of the Barking & Dagenham PDA project which was set up to develop the use of Handheld Computers (PDAs) for teaching and learning within the Borough. The purpose of this review is to log the progress of the project at the outset and then at regular intervals in order to identify progress, challenges and future direction of the project and attempt to identify the particular value PDAs play in learning.

### Background

The project grew from a successful collaboration between Dulwich Picture Gallery, Warren Comprehensive School and StreetAccess Software Company. and those involved in it were eager to see whether the stimulating learning environment fostered by this technology could be replicated at Valence House Museum in Barking and Dagenham.

The first phase of the Barking and Dagenham PDA Project will use PDAs and wireless technology to introduce students to the wealth of resources at Valence House Museum, the only surviving of the five manor houses of Dagenham. Using cutting edge technology they will experience the hidden world of history the real people behind the portraits

### Why PDAs?

Mobile technology provides opportunities for anywhere and anytime learning. Students have access to information and data from a variety of sources. The private and the familiar nature of mobile technology appeals and initial findings showed that PDAs encourage active engagement in learning and offer personalised learning.

The project will concentrate initially on the development and the use of Trailmaker software developed by StreetAccess as it has features which make it flexible enough to be applied to a variety of educational settings and through many subject areas.

- The content called 'trails' are scripted by teachers and educators
- Students can navigate 'trails' at their own pace and their responses are accessed via the Internet
- Remote learning is integrated with class-based teaching

## Project milestones Autumn Term 2005

### Project Management

- A one year part-time secondment has been established to co-ordinate and steer the project in order that it can be extended to different subject areas and key stages.
- External & Borough support and interest in the project as part of ICT Test Bed in schools.

## Resources

- Senior Advisor for ICT and Lead Officer for the ICT Test Bed in Barking & Dagenham supporting and assisting developments
- Administrative support from the LA
- Collaboration with the Heritage Team
- Liaising with the Borough Web Team

## Collaboration with Subject Teams at CIAS

- Training day for Advisory Team and members of the Heritage Staff at Valence House was well received. Their support, enthusiasm and direction will be crucial as they liaise with teachers in Borough Schools
- Different applications of the software are being devised for Science, History, Geography and Art

## Involvement of Test Bed Schools

- At Warren Secondary there are definite plans to extend the use of PDA's in class to other subject areas within the school such as PE and History and embed practice within the Art Department
- Expertise of staff at Warren is being used to develop a prototype for multiple charging units. Technical support and advice is on hand as a result of the pilot and prior involvement in this initiative.
- Collaboration with Eastbury Secondary School (100 PDA's)

## Writing of 'Trails'

Teachers and Heritage Staff devise tours, trails, guides and lessons which can be accessed wirelessly in the museum using Handheld Computers (PDA's).

An important part of the project is the use of PDA's in the classroom to support remote learning at Valence House. Teachers use the software to tailor-make lesson materials that are in line with existing schemes of work.

Following training the first 'Trails' for Valence House have been planned or written for use by students at KS2, 3, 4 & A level

- Critical and close partnership with StreetAccess includes training and modelling exemplars for the Borough.
- Art A Level 'Trail' <http://62.173.95.203/ArtNet.dll/getPage?&P=3421&M=1>

## Dissemination

- There have been many opportunities to disseminate the project to a wider audience this term
- Teacher Action Research Presentations at CARN/PRAR Conference 2005
- Handheld Learning 2005 Goldsmiths Collage London
- ICT Conferences for Academies Nov 2005
- Project website: <http://www.lbbd.gov.uk/9-cias/ict-team/ict-team-pda.html>

## Critical issues

There are of course many issues which need addressing at the outset.

- Setting up wireless access at Valence House.
- The practical issue of getting PDAs into schools and encouraging their use given the scope of the ICT Test Bed Project. There is a desire to embed existing practice and an understandable reluctance to take on board another initiative.
- The provision of adequate training to ensure that the PDAs and Trailmaker software is accessible
- The application of the software into existing practice and the support of advisory team is crucial if teachers are to be freed up to collaborate and take ownership of the writing of 'Trails'.
- Technical support at all stages of the project is crucial. Issues so far have been upgrading the devices, battery maintenance, sourcing multiple chargers.
- The integration of existing content onto PDA platform.

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