

Case Study

Industry: Education

University of Sheffield



The background

The University of Sheffield was opening a brand-new, state-of-the-art building called the Information Commons (IC). The IC is a meeting and communications hub for students that has more than 1300 study spaces, 500 fully networked PCs, and a library with more than 100,000 volumes of reference and short-loan books, including the most popular and heavily used undergraduate texts. The IC also includes the CILASS, two fixed-space “collaboratories,” specifically built for inquiry-based learning.

Because the IC was designed to make the most of the latest technologies and be a cutting-edge building, the internal signage was a crucial element of the design. The university wanted to use digital signage to deliver both media-rich content and general information to everyone using the building. In fact, the university decided it didn’t want to add traditional signage until after the building had been open for some time.

The solution

University of Sheffield AV manager Ian Knowles reviewed the range of potential solutions and knew he wanted a digital signage installation to target all users of the building — staff, students, and visitors. Flash animation would be used to create dynamic, eye-catching displays.

Because the IC encompasses six floors, the system selected had to be flexible and robust. The digital signage would need to display multiple channels of content with both local and remote control capability. Plus, he determined that authorised staff on terminals throughout the six floors of the IC would need to make local browser-based text updates. In addition, all the new AV equipment needed to be successfully networked with existing infrastructure and previous installations.

Mr. Knowles chose a system comprised of (18) iCOMPEL™ units from Black Box Network Services, combined with (18) Samsung LCD panels to provide a network of remote — and locally — controlled display sources.

The result

The installation was completed in three working days, and all the digital displays were showing content shortly after. The project has given the IC a unique method of communicating with staff, students, and visitors. The dynamic display system with multiple channel applications carries the relevant messages very effectively and does so 24/7, providing the university with a 21st-century facility.

“Digital signage targets all users of the building—staff, student or visitor—equally, with relevant information for all.”

Ian Knowles, AV Manager, University of Sheffield