



“XMA is always helpful and always delivers.”

XMA has helped Babington Community Technology College and the Cooke e-Learning Foundation to enable children and adults within Leicester to access ICT opportunities at home.



In some parts of a community, computers, laptops and Internet access have been adopted as a necessary way of life. For others, perhaps within the same community, they are still not readily available. In Leicester, however, work is underway to try and ensure that everyone within the city has the same opportunities and equal access to IT facilities.

Babington Community Technology College is at the heart of this quest as Peter Smith, retired senior deputy principal and now Extended Services manager, explains. He says: “The College serves Beaumont Leys in Leicester which has a large immigrant population and around 27 languages are spoken in school.

“In 2005, I set up the Cooke e-Learning Foundation, a community outreach project of the college, and became managing director. It’s a charity which aims to help spread IT opportunities to more people.”

The charity was primarily set up to run a leased laptop scheme. For a small, monthly contribution from parents, students can take home a new Toshiba laptop through which to access school work or Internet resources. Peter Smith says: “We wanted to enhance the learning environment. The school goes into a contract with a leasing company and purchases Toshiba laptops. Parents then lease the laptops from the Foundation.”

According to Peter Smith, the scheme offers huge advantages to children who might otherwise miss out on learning opportunities afforded by IT. He says: “XMA provides us with the laptops and parents contribute between £10 and £15 a month for about 3 years. The new laptops have a three year guarantee. It means that all children have a chance to have a computer at home and, at the end of the scheme, the family own the laptop.”



Supporting your learning environment!



Thanks to the scheme, youngsters can use the internet and access exciting school resources at home. However, Foundation volunteers wanted to go even further. Peter Smith explains: "It's a charity so we also said, 'why don't we recycle the PCs we use in schools and reuse them'? Now people have the option to go for the laptop scheme or, for a small donation, they can have a recycled PC. We collect redundant computers from schools, colleges and local businesses."

The PC scheme means people can have a refurbished, second hand computer for a very low cost, which is guaranteed for three months. The project has been successful throughout the community – enabling families to use technology for learning or obtaining new skills and, for some, making it easier for them to communicate with family overseas. For youngsters, it also means when they leave school they will already be comfortable with IT skills which may help them at work.

BECTA contract

Since the charity was set up three years ago, the success of its relationship with XMA has also opened more doors within Leicester. XMA later successfully bid for the Computers for Pupils scheme to provide students throughout Leicester with laptops. The initiative is part of a Government project to see disadvantaged pupils given access to ICT. Through the scheme another 850 Toshiba laptops have been distributed around the city, including at Babington.

A self-maintainer scheme, run by Toshiba and XMA, has enabled some of the IT technicians who work for the charity to become qualified to repair the computers.

Peter Smith says: "XMA organised for the charity's IT team to be trained to repair, fix, service and maintain the Toshiba laptops and we offer that service throughout the city. They received formal training last October and, since then, XMA has also arranged on-the-job work placements, based in Nottingham, so technicians can get hands-on experience."

"We also have access to further support through a website where we can check out parts, serial numbers and warranties for all our laptops and we have a direct line to the spares department and technical staff. Anyone with a problem can come to us for advice. It means a quality service for the schools and pupils."

A good working relationship

Whatever the project with XMA, the work has always been characterised by a good relationship between the organisations. Peter Smith says: "The bottom line is that they give me a better service".

"I have a great relationship with my account manager who always makes the effort to come out to see me and is always very helpful. I feel I'm a high priority. We've never had any problems. XMA is always helpful and always delivers."

A firm, technical foundation

The relationship between XMA and Toshiba has also proved useful. Peter Smith says: "There's a healthy relationship between XMA and Toshiba which helps us immensely. We know that the foundations we need are in place and we can rely on them both."



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