Epson projectors prove their value at Prince Alfred College

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Ian Pilkington
Assistant Network Manager
Prince Alfred College

Prince Alfred College

Adelaide-based Prince Alfred College is a high profile boys school with approximately 1,000 students aged between 4 and 18.

Challenges

- Gain full integration within the existing Windows and Mac network
- Connectivity required to make full use of third-party wall-mounted control panels
- Reduce expenditure resulting from lamp failures
- Eliminate excessive monitoring and maintenance overheads

Solution

26 Epson EMP-83 Projectors

Benefits

- Improved integration of multimedia within the curriculum
- Full remote management and monitoring of all projectors
- Automatic advance notification via e-mail of potential problems
- Dramatically extended lamp-life

Located near the centre of Adelaide, Prince Alfred College is one of Australia's leading boys schools, having been established in 1869. With a student population of almost 1,000 boys aged between 4 and 18, the college is focused on providing students with a stimulating and creative learning environment. Throughout, that environment was further enhanced with the introduction of 26 Epson EMP-83 projectors.

The connectivity value

According to the college's assistant network manager, Ian Pilkington, one of the strong features that came out in favour of the EMP-83 during evaluation was the installation flexibility afforded by means of the in-built Ethernet (RJ-45), Serial (RS-232) and audio-output ports. "I've seen a large number of third-party projectors that have network connectivity built-in, but with the EMP-83, Epson stands out as being a company that does it very well," he says.

Along with the ability to integrate the projectors within the college's Windows and Mac network via the Ethernet port, the RS-232 port has enabled the setup of each projector to include a third-party wall-mounted control panel. "This was a feature very high on our list of requirements," Pilkington says. "We had already decided on the control panel, but needed a projector that could connect to it without any need for workarounds; and this is just one of the areas where the EMP-83 came to the fore."

Cutting out the leg-work

With classrooms located across a large area, the network management software bundled with each EMP-83 has proven to be of particular value, being instrumental in minimising the workload required to maintain and monitor each projector.

Using the Epson network management software, Pilkington can remotely log in to any one of the EMP-83 projectors and view a comprehensive status report. This gives him the ability to maintain a proactive approach to support and as a result, provide teachers and students with uninterrupted use of the projectors. Even when the projectors are in use, Pilkington can access and monitor them from any workstation across the network.

The remote monitoring of the college's EMP-83s is given a further edge with the in-built e-mail system, which can be configured to automatically send e-mails should any one or more of the projector's sensors detect a problem. "The e-mail feature is without doubt one of the main features that makes looking after these projectors extremely

easy," Pilkington says. "Instead of having to deal to break-downs caused by overheating or some other failure, I'm able to address any such problems well ahead of time by means of the projectors themselves sending out e-mail warnings.

"If a projector starts to overheat, the in-built sensor detects it and I receive an e-mail telling me of the problem in a matter of seconds. I'm then able to remotely switch off the projector before any damage is caused, and get over to the classroom and see what's causing the problem."

Pilkington has even configured the projectors to notify him immediately if lamp covers have been left open, fan sensors detect problems and even if there is a degradation of image quality. "The projectors pretty much look after themselves when it comes to detecting and reporting any problems," Pilkington says. "The only time I have had to actually go to classrooms and check up on anything was when I did a clean of the filters last year."

Lamp-life

In putting forward a detailed list of projector requirements prior to purchase, the college stipulated that lamp-life was a key issue. Aside from the cost associated with replacing lamps with minimal life ratings, the concern was that such lamps would represent constant interruptions to classes. It was precisely for this reason that many third-party projectors were not recommended to the college.

With the EMP-83 featuring the advanced Epson Twin Optimised Reflection Lamp, the college's 26 projectors have lamps with a rating of up to 4,000 hours. But even with this assurance of lamp longevity, Pilkington makes good use of various features to protect lamps from being over used. These include periodic remote monitoring of expended lamp life, and scheduling projectors to be turned off automatically at a given time.

Ideal for education

When it comes to robustness and reliability, Pilkington is quick to point out that reliability in an education environment is of paramount importance. "Projectors have become an increasingly vital tool for teachers and students," he says. "And it's almost expected that classrooms have access to multimedia projectors. Students, for example, might be giving a presentation and make reference to a particular Web site or page.

"In these cases, the teacher can immediately access that Web site and project it onto the classroom's projection screen using the EMP-83. If the projectors we were using did not have the reliability that's evident in the EMP-83s, I would be inundated with complaints from teachers.

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