

ANGUS COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE
27 AUGUST 2002

THE USE OF IDENTIKIT BIOMETRIC BORROWER IDENTIFICATION IN ANGUS
SCHOOLS

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

This report gives details relating to biometric borrower identification in school libraries and seeks homologation of its use.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the committee

- a) approves the use of the *Identikit* system in Angus schools
- b) notes and approves the guidance given to schools regarding informing parents on the introduction of the system
- c) notes and approves the potential for pupils, parents and staff to opt out of this method of borrowing material
- d) notes the positive impact its use has on the perception of school libraries

2. BACKGROUND

The eight Angus secondary schools either already have in place or are presently preparing for conversion to the *Eclipse* automated library management system from *Micro Librarian Systems*. In addition to its flexible and user friendly format, key features of this system include networking to enable users to search the catalogue from classrooms and departments, a library floor plan which shows the location of an item through a flashing beacon and a facility for adding reviews and images to catalogue records. A further feature is *Identikit*, an optional module which uses biometric fingerprint technology to enrol and subsequently issue material to borrowers. Readers can still register and borrow material using alternative methods (e.g. PIN numbers in the form of bar code labels) if they wish. As conversion to *Eclipse* progresses across the secondary schools it is intended to introduce the use of the *Identikit* module in all eight schools.

Eight Angus primary schools have a system called *Junior Librarian*, an automated library management system designed for smaller schools from the same company. Only one of these schools has purchased *Identikit*

Recent reports in the press about the *Identikit* system may have given rise to some concerns. The intention of this report is to give accurate information about the technology in use and procedures for its introduction.

The *Identikit* module has been piloted in Angus by Brechin High School who started using it a year ago. Parents were informed in advance that the system was being introduced and were invited to contact the school for more information if they wished. The launch was covered in the local press. There have been no instances of pupils objecting to having their finger

scanned nor of parents questioning the use of the system. The introduction of such leading edge technology has helped to raise the profile of the library and generated interest in borrowing material. In particular issues to boys have increased. It has additionally the benefit of avoiding the problems of lost and damaged cards and borrowers using other borrowers' membership cards.

Webster's High installed the module just prior to the end of the summer term and parents were informed via the school newsletter. The school proposes to fully implement the system during the autumn term. Arbroath High similarly converted to *Eclipse* from their previous system at the end of the summer term. They hope to start using the *Identikit* module to register borrowers and issue material during the autumn term once parents have been informed. Arbroath Academy are going live with the new catalogue system from the start of term but the librarian is presently using alternative means to issue materials. A letter will be sent home to inform parents when *Identikit* is loaded on their new upgraded network.

Following conversion to *Eclipse* during the session 2002 – 2003, the four remaining secondary schools will introduce the *Identikit* module.

Rosemount Primary School is presently the one primary school with *Identikit*, which it proposes to begin to use during the Autumn Term 2002 after parents have been informed.

3. TECHNICAL DETAILS

MLS is the leading provider of library management systems to education. The *Identikit* module was launched in June 2000 following extensive testing. Approximately 1000 of the 4000 plus schools with *MLS* systems have installed the *Identikit* software.

- Biometric fingerprint technology means that no image of a fingerprint is ever stored.
- The touch pad system creates a mathematical template that provides fully secure identification, just like any other identity number.
- This data is encrypted for further security and cannot be used in any other database.
- It is not possible to recreate an image of the original scanned finger.
- The data can be deleted at any time at the borrower's request.
- All biometric data is deleted automatically when the borrower leaves and their library record deleted.
- The scanner uses harmless CCD technology.
- Biometric technology is extremely accurate.

The system does not cause the Information Commissioner any concern.

4. ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED BY SCHOOLS

Given the potential sensitivity it is recommended practice that schools ensure that parents are notified prior to the system being used. Parents and pupils should be given reassurance that the software does not retain any image of the fingerprint. It is also recommended practice that there should be an opportunity for parents or pupils to seek more detail about the system if they wish. All Angus schools using *Identikit* are acting in line with this recommended practice.

All schools will still be able to use alternative means for registering borrowers and issuing materials and there will be an opportunity for parents and pupils to opt out if they wish.

As well as notifying parents about the introduction of the system, schools should include reference to *Identikit* in the IT agreement signed by parents. Schools should also consider including information about the system within the section on the school library resource centre in the school handbook.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

6. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

Given the potential for parents and pupils to opt out of using *Identikit* and the strictly limited use of the information held, there are no Human Rights implications arising as a result of approving this report.

7. CONSULTATION

In accordance with the Standing Orders of the Council, this report has been the subject of consultation with the Chief Executive, Director of Law & Administration and the Director of Finance. The Director of Information Technology has also been consulted.

JIM ANDERSON
Director of Education

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing this report.