

*Incorporating 480,000 square metres of floor space, the University of Manchester is a large and prestigious university. This prestige, coupled with the fact that it can offer all the advantages of being located in a major northern city means that places at the university are highly sought after. The University of Manchester also happens to be a very attractive place to study. The main buildings are listed property and present a very imposing backdrop. All property is either owned or leased by the University and the facilities are all managed by the Estates Office, who now use the IMPACTxp Computerised Maintenance Management System for scheduling the resources required to maintain the buildings and the management of costs.*

The University, where John Duffy is head of the Property Services Division of the Estates Office, had always recognised that a computerised maintenance management system was an



invaluable tool. Indeed several years ago a system serviced by an IBM mainframe computer, had been developed in house for issuing work orders, purchase order requisitions, stores management and scheduling labour. Over the years this system had become outdated largely due to the fact that it was a bespoke package and was not considered appropriate for the long term. Consequently a decision was made to purchase an off the shelf product that would be backed by a continual enhancement policy.

In an attempt to standardise the I.T infrastructure, the main requirement was that the chosen system had to run on an Oracle database. The IMPACTxp system was one of four systems that met the criteria. In fact, IMPACTxp runs on a wide range of databases including Progress, Oracle and Microsoft SQL Server. The University of Manchester was highly impressed with the IMPACTxp system and requested user visits to existing sites in order to assess the functionality and adaptability of IMPACTxp first hand. An order was placed for a 25-user system in July 1998, to utilise a number of modules including Help Desk, Schedule of Rates and Project Management.

The Estates Office is continually challenged on the cost of the service that they provide. The Higher Education Funding Council for England

(HEFCE), is the link between government and university and for an establishment to receive the necessary funding, guidelines have to be adhered to and reports have

to be submitted. The Funding Council recommends that all universities utilise the same precise definitions in their reports. It was therefore crucial that the IMPACTxp System was configured to allow the University to produce reports using the bench marked criteria. For this reason 20 days were set aside for implementation and system configuring. Ray Worley, a support engineer at Matrix was available on a full time basis during this time and was appointed project manager to work alongside Dave McLaughlin (Technical Information Manager). To ensure that the target was met, weekly and monthly progress meetings were held by the team to drive the project forward.

The Base Module is the core of the system containing such details as the asset register, employee files and complete maintenance work order scheduling. Due to the huge amount of equipment at the University, the asset structure was limited to four levels of detail - the last level being the electrical and mechanical services for each area.

The Help Desk Module was also installed. This provides the opportunity for personnel not skilled in engineering matters to be able to receive and manage incoming engineering related requests. Each help desk request is assigned a unique identification number and is converted into a work order, if appropriate. This means that the caller

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can enquire on the status of the request at any time. The Help Desk module has consequently improved customer service within the Estates Office and response times have been reduced.

The Schedule of Rates Module is also helping the Property Services Division to increase the standardisation of working procedures and costs. This is achieved by attaching codes derived from a national schedule of rates table onto work orders. Each code represents a standard cost for a particular type of work and can also represent full details of the job procedure. This has been very useful when dealing with on-site contractors who are prevented from overcharging.

Throughout the installation, key personnel were trained in one of two training schools back at Matrix House. "Training is very important and if you are not careful you can skip on it", says John

Duffy. "Dave McLaughlin is very computer literate but for people like the Help Desk operators it is very important to get it right because the Help Desk is the front door to a lot of staff". Dave McLaughlin was trained in key areas of the system as well as in administration to oversee housekeeping of the system.

The system went live at the beginning of February 1999 after a smooth initial installation. "We would have been naïve if we had thought there wouldn't be any problems. Ray Worley has been an excellent investment and the installation has run quite smoothly considering the size of the project". Ray continues to be the official project manager for The University of Manchester on a consultative basis.

Staff at the University of Manchester, are confident of the future for IMPACTxp. "Matrix are a nice firm to deal with and the people helpful and adaptable. We are delighted with the service overall".

