

## Product description

Self-Service library management system for primary school libraries

<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Micro Librarian Systems Limited</b>
<b>Version</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Subjects</b>	
<b>Key stage</b>	Foundation, KS1, KS2
<b>Age range</b>	4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
<b>COL product code</b>	<b>MLSJ-JUNIORLIBRARIAN</b>
<b>Platforms available</b>	Windows, Windows NT
<b>Available as</b>	Network, Single User, Site licence/multiple user
<b>Technical requirements</b>	
<b>Product type</b>	
<b>Support materials</b>	Readit is a cross-curricular information handling skills programme designed to support Junior Librarian. Readit is available in 3 sets, Foundation Stage / KS1, KS2 Yrs 3-4 and KS2 Yrs 5-6. One copy is included when ordering Junior Librarian.
<b>QCA schemes of work supported</b>	The software could also be used as a resource for teaching the ICT schemes of work that incorporate databases as a central theme - aspects of QCA units 3C, 5B, 5C and 6D
<b>Keywords and topics</b>	

## Company details:

### Micro Librarian Systems Limited



With over 7000 users, mainly in the UK, but also throughout Europe, Africa, the Middle East and as far as Cambodia, Micro Librarian Systems are the leading provider of Library management systems to Education in the UK. MLS were also the world's first to bring you fingerprint recognition for borrowers. Main systems are Junior Librarian (Primary/Infant level libraries) Eclipse 2 (Secondary Schools) Eclipse Pro (Colleges, corporate libraries and School Library Services)

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## Overview

Junior Librarian is software that is designed to automate your school library, keeping track of all stock items. It makes the issuing and returning of books easy enough for children to carry out independently, allowing them to learn, whilst having fun operating the system!

On one level it is a valuable time-saver for teachers or librarians, but it also empowers children in the library environment, allowing them to manage their own borrowing. In the background, the software automatically tracks and takes care of the issuing and returning, as well as the value and whereabouts of library stock, whether on the shelves or on loan.

The publisher claims that it will "motivate children to develop library skills and read more books" and in our school library it has certainly had a positive effect on our library users.

Operating equally well on a single workstation as it does across a school-wide network, installing Junior Librarian on a network has several advantages, allowing children to search for books, reserve books, check which books they have on loan and also write a book review and add it to the system - all easily accessible from their own classroom, the ICT suite, or wherever they are in school.

Appearing at first to be a sophisticated administration management tool, don't let that detract from the very powerful motivation that begins to develop as children quickly become familiar with it. They love having their own library card, and also operating the barcode scanner, taking it in turns to be the librarian in a very mature manner!

Junior Librarian will also provide information about your library stock, for example, which books are being borrowed, which pupils or classes are borrowing (or not borrowing!), and even an automatic package which produces clear print-outs of statistics ready to present to an Ofsted inspector!

Overall, this is an extremely well-presented piece of software, which fulfils its objectives clearly on the surface for children, whilst providing a very powerful management tool in the background, for use by staff.

## Context of evaluation

The evaluation of the software was carried out over a number of weeks in a junior school library, although I have seen Junior Librarian successfully used by younger children. I have used it with my Year 4 class, although it is a popular tool now across the school.

Before using the software, all of the library stock needed to be put onto the system - being given barcode stickers and then being added to the computer database. Although this took a little time to start with, it was necessary and once done, shouldn't have to be done again. A few parent helpers volunteered to come in and help catalogue the stock and with the help of the "Magi-Cat" database software, most of the titles were simply read by the barcode scanner and all details such as title, price, author and even keywords were automatically transferred onto the system.

Once up and running, the software needed only minimal explanation in order for the children to use it independently and they look forward to using it in their library sessions, as it makes them feel like "proper" librarians! Very motivational!

**Written by** Martyn Fearn 27/06/2005

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**Planning issues**

There was no real requirement for any extra planning time by the teachers involved, as once the product was set up on the network, we didn't have any problems with it. We did make a few simple help-sheets on how to operate the loans system, but these were soon not needed, as the system became quickly familiar to staff and children.

Some staff have made use of the "online review" tool, which means that their children have written book reviews and "published" them onto our school system, so that in future anyone who searches for a book can read what some other children thought of it. (There is a way of making sure that children's work is checked by a teacher before it is released for the other children to read!)

**Assessment**

Logging on as a "higher-level" user allows you access to lots of ready-made reports, which can be searched and printed. There are lots of these, including current loans, past loans, overdue books, reminder slips for the whole class, reminder slips for individual children, children who have borrowed most/least books, titles which are most/least popular etc. Data can also be split between boys and girls, giving separate information for each,

At the moment, our library is set up so that one member of staff accesses this information and passes it on to relevant staff, but there is no reason why all staff should not be allowed access to it. All data is secure and passworded, or the fingerprint scanner can be used.

Some of the reports allow for future predictions and planning - for example which books to buy next, which popular books may need replacing or 2nd copies buying, which books are constantly on loan etc.

**Pupil tracking**

Pupils can be tracked by how many times they borrow stock and by what type of stock they are borrowing. These can be broken down by gender and comparisons made.

Print-outs can be given to each class teacher to show how their class is using the library.

**Special educational needs**

The software can be customised to allow for different levels of user and different features can also be switched on and off. For example, books and other loan items can be scanned in and out using the barcode scanner, but if pupils were unable to use the scanner, they can be returned using a PIN number. For children who may need a larger barcode, these can be enlarged and mounted onto individual library cards, which can be personalised by the child themselves. My class have used these cards as browsing cards too.

Use of the fingerprint scanner is easy and would enable children who may be unable to locate their name to use their finger or thumb to access the system. The time that information is on display to the user - for example the title being issued or returned - can be changed, giving longer on display if necessary.

Another attractive feature is that almost every tool or icon will "speak" to the user, confirming what they have selected, giving positive feedback.

**Literacy**

Most instructions on screen are read out audibly by the software, meaning even the youngest or less able readers can access the system. Text commands are supported by clearly visible buttons - on the front page these are easily distinguishable coloured shapes.

Children could be encouraged to write book reviews and save them to the library catalogue.

**Support materials**

The software comes with full instruction manuals and is easy to use anyway, but there is also the addition of a telephone helpdesk, who I have found to be friendly and helpful and have always solved my queries over the telephone there and then. Sometimes I use the company website, which provides an individual user area to the school, where further help is provided, along with downloadable updates and additional modules.

There is also the option of having a trainer deliver a day's training to members of staff who will use the software. We took this up and found it reinforced the tools we had looked at, but also gave us a chance to ask questions about the things we had seen were available, but hadn't found out how to work yet! Well worth while!

**Student response**

Overall, the children have loved working with the new system, which is far superior to our old "card and ticket" system. No more lost cards or book tickets lying around the library!

**Numeracy**

Work could be done with older pupils on data handling, estimation and averages. For example, a topic on the most popular authors in school, or a bar chart with average number of loans per class, or a pie chart depicting different Dewey categories etc.

**Key Stages**

Foundation, KS1, KS2

**Suitable for ages**

5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18

**Curriculum coverage**

Linking the product to the National Curriculum is not difficult, as it potentially meets a lot of specific objectives from the Literacy Strategy and from the ICT programme, with the Readit package, which is designed to be used alongside Junior Librarian. Readit encourages children to become proficient at searching for, handling and using information, as they integrate ICT into library time. Children are asked to work together and develop their speaking and listening skills as they search for and use information on a variety of subjects.

**Learning outcomes**

The main learning outcome from the children's point of view is that they are able to use the software as an everyday ICT tool in the library. They know which books they have currently on loan, but can search for other books/titles/authors just like in a professional library - which suddenly leaves them feeling very grown up, especially when they can see who the book they would like next is on loan to and request it. Children learn effective use of keywords and boolean searches and there is the potential to teach a lot of aspects of the ICT curriculum, for example with using and interrogating databases, through Junior Librarian. All children's use is recorded and saved to the system and any children's current and/or previous loan history can be tracked, even when they change classes and progress up throughout the school.

**Design and navigation**

The software is incredibly well thought-out in terms of design and useability. A clean "front-end" with simple, clear buttons and audio and visual feedback makes it ideal for younger children, without putting off those who are older and more experienced. The sound is good and gives clear feedback, although it can be used without sound, if so desired. The initial choices are clear and easy to use, meaning less time is spent on learning how to use the system and more time on making it work for you.

Teachers and librarians will generally be the ones who are invited to log on at a higher level and manage stock, control loans and requests and authorise book reviews, but a few of our trusted Year 6 pupils took on some of the administrative tasks for me. Each screen is bright and clear and clutter-free, making it obvious where to enter text and click buttons. There aren't any redundant buttons or ones which get hardly used. Backing up data is easy to do and can be done manually to a flash drive, floppy or CD or automatically to the server. One useful feature was the "My books" button, which enabled children to find out which book they currently had on loan, without asking the teacher - a real timesaver! The concept of an automated library catalogue not only takes the hard work out of auditing and cataloguing stock, but also makes the children want to use the system - even my most reluctant boys were motivated to borrow books when they realised they got to use the barcode scanner!

**Intended Use**

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

**Labour saving aspects**

The software has been loaded in such a way that it starts up automatically whenever the library computer is switched on, meaning that no advance preparation is necessary. Setting up children on the system is easy, as data can be imported from other school management systems quickly and easily, without having to type in lots of names. From a teacher or librarian's point of view, this product has made my library easier to manage. I now have clear knowledge of my stock, number and types of books, but also I can print off (automatically) the most popular books in my library, those that are least borrowed and much more... even down to identifying which children are not borrowing books. There are a number of ready-made reports which can be printed off - even statistics to show Ofsted!

**Ease of installation**

The software came on a single CD-ROM and was very easy to install. There was a choice of running it as a standalone version on the library computer, or having it accessible across the whole school network. Initially we installed it on just the one machine, but quickly found that it made more sense to put it on our server and allow children to access it across the school. This meant that children could search for books in the school library, from their classrooms. We did make sure that the machine running the barcode scanner in the library was an up-to-date computer, so that it worked quickly.

**Schemes of work supported**

With the Readit package, which is designed to be used alongside Junior Librarian, it encourages children to become proficient at searching for, handling and using information, as they integrate ICT into library time. Children are asked to work together and develop their speaking and listening skills as they search for and use information on a variety of subjects. The software could also be used as a resource for teaching the ICT schemes of work that incorporate databases as a central theme - aspects of QCA units 3C, 5B, 5C and 6D.