

Press Release

Gill & Macmillan Lighten the Load for Caritas College First Years

Eindhoven/Dublin, 3 September 2008--- Gill & Macmillan, the leading Irish book publisher, today launched a pilot scheme that will take some weight off the shoulders of the first-year pupils of Caritas College, Ballyfermot and bring them a step closer to the paperless age.

St Brendan's class, a group of 18 first year students at the all-girl school will say goodbye to heavy schoolbags this year. They will become the first class of students worldwide to replace their academic load with the iLiad, an electronic book device.

The main difference for the girls will be a dramatic reduction in the weight of their schoolbags as they replace more than six kilograms (almost 13 and a half pounds) of textbooks, workbooks, an English dictionary and a novel with this 400 gram (less than a pound) e-book. The students will be able to make notes and even doodle on the pages as in a regular textbook and then decide whether they wish to erase or save their notes. In addition, each iLiad reader is pre-loaded with 50 out of copyright classic novels which will be available free of charge to each student.

Peter Thew, Sales and Marketing Director at Gill & Macmillan explained that this is the first classroom trial for an e-book in the world.

"We are pleased to be leading the field with this pilot project and are very excited about its potential. Although we believe that the widespread adoption of e-readers is some time off, this project allows us to determine how well they work in the classroom, how the pupils interact with them and to examine their potential. This will be a learning process for us as well as the girls.

"One hurdle to its widespread adoption is that electronic books and their content are outside the current legal definition of a book (categorised as 16 pages, printed and bound) and so VAT incurred is 21%, which is a major problem that must be addressed. In the 1970's the Irish government made the bold decision to remove VAT from all books and we urge it to act again and resolve this issue by redefining the nature of a book in today's world."

Adrienne Whelan, Principal of Caritas College, said that the school is honoured to take part in this pilot programme.

“This is a fantastic opportunity for the girls and staff. We are so proud to have been chosen by Gill & Macmillan to take part in this trial. Our staff and pupils have received training in how to use the different functions of the iLiad and we look forward to exploring this technology together. We all know that young people are very technologically savvy and we expect that they will take to it with ease. It is also a real bonus to know that a specialist from Gill & Macmillan is on the end of the phone to help with any questions we may have.”

Developed by iRex Technologies in the Netherlands, the iLiad uses a new display technology known as electronic paper, which makes it a very similar experience to reading ink on paper. Crucially, it has none of the flickering or reflection associated with reading from a laptop or PC. Its screen uses less power and is more energy efficient, with an average battery life of 12 to 15 hours. Information can be transferred directly from a computer to the iLiad, which means it can replace the need for both a printer and paper. The iLiad has 256MB internal flash memory supplemented by a 1GB SD Card and typically retails at €599.

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Note to editors

Gill & Macmillan is Ireland's leading publisher of college, further education, school and general interest non-fiction books. The company employs 75 staff at its base in Park West and manages nationwide (and international) distribution for a number of smaller publishing firms.

iRex Technologies BV, has been instrumental in pushing the frontiers of digital reading since 2001 when its team developed the electronic paper display for the Sony Librié, the first commercially available e-reader launched in 2004. Following the formation of iRex Technologies in 2005 as a spin-off company from Royal Philips Electronics, its focus on open innovation and co-operation has seen iRex become the world's leading provider of solutions for reading written digital content with the ease and comfort of print on paper. This is combined with the interactivity, flexibility and up-dating functionality provided by digital information. Located on the High Tech Campus in Eindhoven, the Netherlands, iRex serve the B2B market as well as the consumer market and work closely with companies and publishers to enable them to offer their content (newspapers, books, documents) digitally to clients, subscribers and employees.
www.irextechnologies.com