

CASE STUDY: JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

Upgraded with Extensive Panasonic Laser Projector Deployment

Challenge

To equip the University with the best available hi-tech teaching tools while continuing an ongoing, multi-phased project to upgrade the close to 400 classrooms in older buildings with next-generation laser projection technology.

Solution

Deployment of 60 Panasonic PT-RZ570BU HD laser-phosphor projectors and multimedia teaching and control podiums in every classroom of the new building and ongoing replacement of heritage Panasonic PT-FW300 series and PT-FW430 series LCD projectors in existing classrooms with laser-powered PT-RZ570BU units.

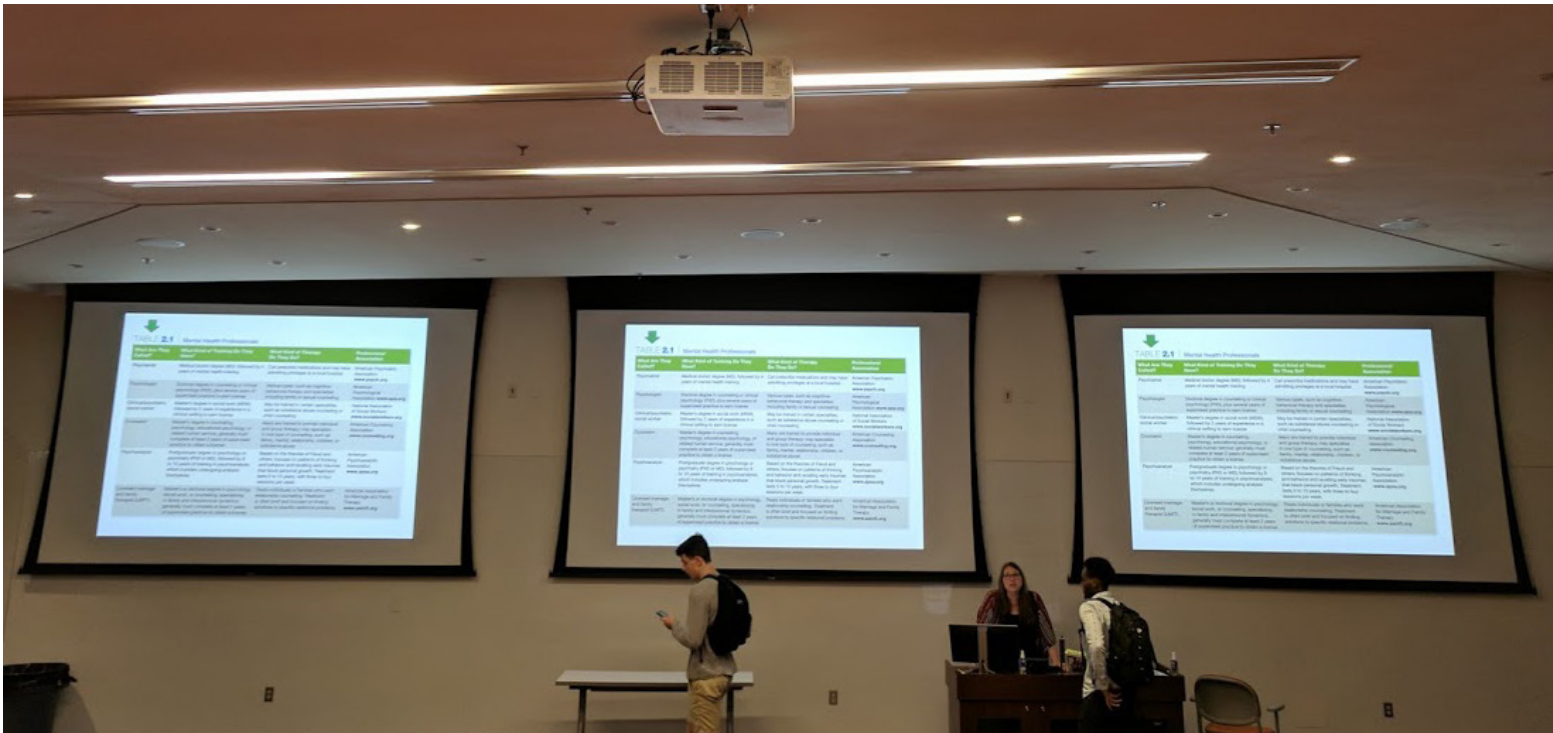
Result

A huge increase in brightness, clarity and resolution. Expanded ability to offer plug and play BYOD (Bring Your Own Devices) access to projects. Extended service intervals that allow all scheduled maintenance to be performed between semesters when classes are not in session.

James Madison University offers 124 bachelors, masters and doctoral degree programs and is home to 21,227 students. In the 119 years since its founding, the university has undergone many changes. But one thing that hasn't changed is the school's culture of innovation. From the installation of the first on-campus radio in 1922 to boasting the world's only state-of-the-art hybrid planetarium, James Madison University is an exciting place for students, teachers or visitors, particularly if you believe that the potential of technology is inextricably linked with the future of higher education.

Another semester over. James Madison University's 21,227 students are home getting a well-deserved rest. Southern song birds, northern cardinals, Virginia rails, song sparrows, chickadees, warblers and numerous others jostle for position on the window sills of silent, empty classrooms.

Not quite. Not exactly. Not at James Madison, where Classroom Technology Specialist Jackie Woolf and her coworkers are busy installing, maintaining, and upgrading the computers, audio/video systems, network and in-class switching controllers and other state-of-the-art electronic teaching aids that have been an integral part of every JMU classroom since the turn of the 21st century.



Unlike most Enterprise and educational users of highly sophisticated, multi-hundred unit projection systems using complex controllers to mix input from numerous archived and live input devices, JMU does not rely on outside integrators to design and install its systems. Every aspect of every project right down to the grunt work of routing each inch of the thousands of feet of cable is done in-house by Ms. Woolf and her coworkers. Which made the brief time between construction wrap-up, faculty move-in and the September 2016 opening day of classes in the new College of Health and Behavioral Studies Building particularly “interesting, to say the least.”

“We are continually upgrading our classrooms as technology advances, so we knew we wanted laser projection. Selecting Panasonic to supply those laser projectors was based on more than the PT-RZ570BU’s unusually bright (5400/5200 lumens) and evenly illuminated image, 20,000:1 contrast ratio and up to 20,000 hours of maintenance-free operation.

“Way back when, as we expanded the system, we realized that the one thing we wanted was projectors designed to make our lives as easy as possible. We needed that because we have a lot of classrooms, some with more than

The PT-RZ570WU/BU is #1!
 #1 in US end-user market share
 for the 5,000 – 5,999 lumens
 laser projector range

Data Source: PMA Research (2017CYQ2 Americas Projector Census and Revenues Report)

one projector, and we had to find the most reliable, low-maintenance projectors available,” Ms. Woolf recalled.

One of the units tested was the Panasonic PT-FW300, but the trial was far from fair.

“For some reason or other, we decided to try the Panasonics in one of the dirtiest, nastiest buildings on campus and, as it turned out, we just loved them,” Jackie Woolf continued. “Seriously, even the lamps were incredible, some of the 300s we’re replacing with lasers right now have



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– Jackie Woolf, Classroom Technology Specialist

like 7,000 hours on the original lamps and are still in use every day. I mean they were so much better than whatever else we saw, even in harsher conditions, so we just had to go with them. Since that time, they have continued to be so successful we’ve just stayed with Panasonic, moving many of the classrooms up to the PT-FW430 series during our last round of updates.”

JMU’s new, \$45.6 million College of Health and Behavioral Studies Building, opened in early September 2016, features 17 classrooms, 13 research laboratories, 19 teaching laboratories, two lecture halls with seating for 165, a speech, language and hearing clinic, a food production laboratory, and a patient simulation laboratory.

Depending on size, each of the classrooms and lecture halls has, one, two, or three of the PT-RZ570BU projectors, motorized 8 ft., 10 ft., or 12 ft. screens, and a “teaching console” that utilizes an Extron CrossPoint System to give instructors and lecturers access to numerous data streams which can be instantly selected and projected via a touch panel.

Regardless of which controller is used or what media source is being projected, Jackie Woolf is sure of one thing: There is a huge difference between the image quality of the PT-RZ570BU laser projectors and JMU’s previous LCD projectors.

“We set some up side by side before we even hung any of them,” she said. “The brightness and clarity were so, so much better. Plus it’s 1080p so it has much better resolution and that can be incredibly important. The 20 LCDs we’re replacing with PT-RZ570BUs right now are in the School of Media Arts and Design Building and the professors and students there are incredibly excited about getting more detail to work with.”

Better overall picture quality, finer detail, brighter images – those are all the kind of improvements users would be expected to rave about. But there is one other PT-RZ570BU advantage that has garnered such ecstatic reviews that even Jackie Woolf seems a bit surprised by all the buzz.

“There’s one thing that I’ve heard many, many, many comments about,” she continued, “the faculty just loves the instant on and off, the elimination of the 60 second wait before you can actually see an image come on. Our faculty love that because they can get right into the subject. It makes you realize how frustrated great teachers can get with anything that creates even a one-minute gap between them and their students.”

This is no surprise: for decades Panasonic has actively sought out and integrated feedback from higher education institutions in every area from bulb replacement design to on/off intervals, so projectors from the PT-FW300 to the PT-RZ570BU are quite literally designed for the classroom. Paired with their stunning image and high-performance reliability, Panasonic laser projectors are the top of the class.