THE RISE OF INTERACTIVE PROJECTORS
EPSON IS AT THE FOREFRONT OF SOME EXCITING NEW TECHNOLOGY

Finger-touch interactivity, mobile device integration and ultra-short-throw projection are fuelling an unstoppable trend

It may have become more interactive, but life in the classroom is never static. For the past decade interactive whiteboards have been installed in classrooms and helped a generation of students learn via advanced teaching methods unheard of a decade earlier, but the demand for the integration of mobile devices and for new kinds of content is creating a thirst for a new, more versatile hands-on technology fit for the progressive classrooms of the 21st century.

At the vanguard of that change is the ultra-short-throw interactive projector. Enhanced by ultra-short-throw technology as well as by brighter, more efficient 3LCD optical engines, it’s a shift that’s being driven by Epson, which already has a 76% share of the ultra-short-throw interactive brand share in Europe and the Middle East1. As the market leader with a long heritage in the education sector, Epson believes its responsibility is to tirelessly innovate to improve a generation of classrooms. Epson’s new range of ultra-short-throw education projectors unveiled at BETT 2014 does just that, ushering-in a new era of interactive projection with some exciting new features that strive to allow for more versatile teaching methods.

Pen problem is no more: Finger-touch

An exciting innovation in Epson’s latest flagship product, finger-touch technology means that there is never the need to hunt for a replacement pen. Finger-touch is available on Epson’s EB-595Wi flagship ultra-short-throw interactive projector, which will go on sale in April 2014.

Perhaps the most exciting technology development recently for both educators and students, finger-touch changes everything by allowing teachers and students to draw, annotate or write using just their finger. With no pen needed, it’s one thing less to lose.

Finger-touch brings some magic to the classroom, but interactivity on Epson’s new EB-5 Series is no novelty; annotations and drawings made by either finger or pen (interactive pens will continue to be options for those who prefer them) can be saved as image files for later inspection. Any interactive work can therefore form part of students’ notes and records.
There are other advantages to interactive projectors that are allowing them to quickly overtake interactive whiteboards in modern teaching environments. Perhaps most crucial of all is a reduced cost of ownership, and a projector’s ability to display and integrate a wide range of content, with video playback and moderator functions through compatible software, just some of a number of a core advantages.

Out of the shadows: ultra short-throw projection

High brightness for all interactive projectors is a given, but Epson’s new EB-5 Series also sees the widespread use of the ultra-short-throw concept. Able to project large images from a very short distance with minimised shadows and glare, it’s the technology that’s making possible the new trend to interactive projectors. Well established, ultra-short throw interactive projectors are perfect for classrooms and are being used throughout both emerging and mature markets.

As well as brightness and an ultra-short-throw image, this new generation of interactive projectors is about some great new device integration software that promises to encourage adoption. Epson’s new models are great for classrooms that want effortless interactivity yet currently struggle to integrate the plethora of mobile devices in the hands of students. “With many pupils now having their own laptop, tablet or smartphone, it makes sense to have a central interactive display that can help manage students’ shared content within the classroom,” says Hans Dummer, head of Visual Imaging, Epson Europe.

Trend to interactive projectors: analysts agree

Arguably the biggest advantage interactive projectors have over interactive whiteboards is a reduced cost of ownership. With the interactivity built into the projector - without the need for a separate, expensive interactive whiteboard - cost is reduced, meaning that educators are able to make their money go further. In addition to this, interactive projectors can display a wide-range of content types that can be edited by multiple students and then saved for later use, which makes them ideal for collaborative learning. So it’s no wonder that education establishments in emerging markets are increasingly bypassing interactive whiteboards altogether in favour of ultra-short-throw interactive projectors, while in more mature education markets there’s now a clear trend to install interactive projectors alongside interactive whiteboards or even to upgrade existing solutions to access a new improved feature set. The existing high penetration of interactive whiteboards is steadily giving way to ultra-short-throw interactive projectors across Europe and the Middle East, and Epson believes this trend is now unstoppable.

Others agree. A report in November 2013 on the Front Projector Market in Europe and the Middle East by FutureSource Consulting highlights this trend, predicting that the market share for ultra-short-throw will more than double by 2017 when it will out-sell standard short-throw
models two-to-one. The same report also highlighted that the interactive projector market enjoyed a massive 12% year-on-year growth in the third quarter of 2013, with touch-based interaction gaining traction to reach a 7.4% share of the interactive total.

**Epson's 76% interactive market share**

Epson expects these trends to continue, and with a 76% ultra-short-throw interactive market share, is in a unique position to lead this shift towards interactive projectors. Epson is also the world’s number one interactive projector manufacturer, its products based around its own core 3LCD projector technology – which is up to three times brighter than rival single-chip DLP projectors – first developed in 1989. This has massively important ramifications for the visible quality of not only text and colours, but also for video.

In an age where design and manufacturing are more often than not completely divorced, Epson stands out as one of the few companies that embraces design and manufacturing as nothing less than an art form, and where a long heritage in the education market informs its products.

Epson is at the forefront of some exciting new technology that culminates in mobile device integration and Epson’s pen-free finger-touch interactivity. All of this will help educational institutions take advantage of – and accelerate – the unstoppable trend to interactive projectors.

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