

SA schoolbook provider is feted as world e-leader

REBECCA BAKER

AN Adelaide school textbook and supplies company is being recognised as a world-leader in providing e-books to secondary students across the nation, as more and more schools embrace digital technology over traditional books.

Campion Education has grown its sales of e-books into secondary schools in Australia nine fold in the past few years.

While Campion's head office is now in Melbourne, its roots remain firmly in Adelaide where it was established by two local families more than two decades ago.

Managing director James Cathro says the growth in demand for secondary e-book school texts across all subjects from metal work to languages and science is "exponential".

"In the last five years, we have seen our sale of e-books grow by about 900 per cent ... (and recently) the world's five largest suppliers of secondary text books have each informed us we are now their largest global distributor of e-texts."

The acknowledgment this month from the leading pub-

lishers – Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, Pearson Australia, Nelson Cengage and Jacaranda came as a shock he said.

"It surprised me in the sense

the Australian education market is comparatively small ... but it tells us something about how far advanced Australia is in that secondary market when it comes to e-books."

Adelaide's Uhrig and Burns families bought the school resource distributor in 1996 while the company was in receivership and have been steadily building it ever since.

"We retain very strong and deep roots in Adelaide but opted to base ourselves in Melbourne simply due to the size of the population in the eastern states," he said.

The company, which employs 140 full-time staff swelling to 1400 casual employees in the lead-up to a new school year, supplies about 3,000 Australian schools and 600,000 students with printed and digital resources, stationery and art supplies.

However, Mr Cathro says the secret to his company's

success isn't a mystery.

"It's about sticking to your business and spending inordinate amounts of time with your customers, to understand what their needs are," he said.

"We don't exist without our customers and our focus is finding solutions for our customers and, increasingly, this is about creating digital solutions for schools – every school is different."



SALES GROWTH: James Cathro, managing director of Campion Education