



## Case Study 12

### Learning Resource Centre, Loreto Normanhurst

Normanhurst NSW

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*(Top) The eastern elevation clearly shows the new building abutting the old. The building is firmly based in red/blue brickwork, the colour being repeated in arches, heads and sills.*

*(Above) The Learning Resource Centre's colonnades connect with the campus walkway system, reinforcing the collegiate feel of the precinct.*

*(Left) A series of shallow six-metre arches cascade around the building. The brickwork above the arches is supported on shelf angles.*

# Learning Resource Centre

Loreto Normanhurst

Normanhurst NSW

In 1609 Mary Ward, founder of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary – better known as the Loreto sisters – predicted that “women in time to come will do much.” As part of this mission, in 1896 the sisters bought 10 ha of land at Normanhurst on Sydney’s northern fringe adjacent to Kuring-gai Chase.

Over the past century the school has grown far beyond the original vision with over 850 students. Some of the building development of the recent past has been less than sympathetic to the historic buildings and Tanner and Associates were called in to prepare a master plan for the school.

The Learning Resource Centre is the first new building in almost a decade. Strictly speaking it is an extension to the 1973 Resource Centre but one that doubles the original floor area and reflects a more enlightened attitude to learning.

Project architect Jocelyn Jackson describes the new three-level building as “very much a building for its site.” The LRC abuts the original centre, enveloping its southern and eastern sides.

The ground floor 160-seat lecture theatre is stepped, taking advantage of the sloping site. Above are five classrooms, three of which can be combined, and on the top level is the Information Resource Centre, described by the principal as “the learning heart of the school.”

Unlike earlier buildings that used opaque windows “to keep external distractions at bay” the LRC embraces the outdoors, with breathtaking views to the distant city.

The solid base of blue/black brickwork is surmounted with a rich blend of red/brown bricks. “The site sloped away to the south,” Jackson explains, “and the strong masonry base called for a strong brick colour.” The light-coloured mortar is finished with a slightly recessed joint, matching adjoining buildings.

A series of six-metre brick arches feature strongly at ground level. Too shallow to be self-supporting, they are steel-reinforced and tied to the building’s concrete structure. Brickwork above the arches is supported on shelf angles.

“The building demanded a site-specific solution and as a result it has a different character on most of its elevations,” says Ms Jackson. “It’s quite a solid building with a unique character and a strong masonry feel.”

Work began in late 1998 and the Learning Resource Centre was officially opened by the Governor-General, Sir William Deane in February 2000.

<b>Client:</b>	Loreto Normanhurst
<b>Architect:</b>	Tanner & Associates
<b>Builder:</b>	Gledhill Constructions
<b>Bricklayer:</b>	D&K Bricklaying
<b>Building cost:</b>	¥3.2 million
<b>Photographer:</b>	Ray Joyce

The southern elevation offers stunning views across the school grounds and adjoining bushland to the distant city. Project architect Jocelyn Jackson describes the Learning Resource Centre as having “a different character on most of its elevations.”