

Library and Information
Week, 12–18 May 2003

Information literacy: power your mind is the theme for Library and Information Week 2003. Here Judith Peacock gives an overview of an innovative information literacy program run by the Queensland University of Technology.

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Outreach 2002: A collaborative schools project

High-school and university information literacy partnering for the 21st century

In 2002, QUT Library conducted *Outreach 2002*, a collaborative trial project in which teaching staff from the QUT Library and MacGregor State High School (MGSHS) developed models for the design, development and delivery of information literacy within the senior school curriculum.

QUT Library is a leader in information literacy teaching and learning. The library assumes a responsibility to contribute its expertise towards developing the information literacy knowledge and skills of the broader community and specifically, in the case of *Outreach 2002*, to that of senior secondary students and secondary teachers. As do many academic libraries, QUT Library provides a significant amount of information literacy education for metropolitan secondary school students via various community service initiatives and campus-based arrangements.

However, while these programs assist students at an individual level of skills development, the library recognised a critical need to also approach information literacy development at a school curriculum level, thereby facilitating broader skills development and ensure a more effective transition into tertiary study.

This innovative project, offered as a staff development program for high school teachers, sought to align tertiary and secondary understandings of information literacy and to provide participating senior school teachers at MGSHS with an opportunity to experience information communication technologies (ICTs) as they are used in a tertiary environment and embedded in a broader information literacy-curriculum development context.

The *Outreach 2002* program consisted of three one-day workshops. The outcomes of the program, as negotiated jointly by the participating QUT librarians and key high school teaching staff, included:

- a shared knowledge and a mutual understanding of information literacy concepts;
- expanded pedagogical knowledge of secondary and tertiary teaching staff;
- enhanced and informed teaching practice by addressing curriculum reform and improving learning experiences; and
- improved articulation between the high school curriculum and that of QUT.

The workshops provided the teachers with an opportunity to de-

velop specific learning experiences and lesson plans which could then be implemented in their own classrooms to develop senior students' information literacy skills.

Outreach 2002 was undertaken during the latter half of 2002, to facilitate implementation of potential curriculum enhancements in 2003. The project was funded by an Education Queensland *Learning Innovation* grant. The course content and format was designed, developed and delivered by the QUT *Outreach* project team of Paula Callan (liaison librarian, Humanities and Human Services), Alice Steiner (liaison librarian, Creative Industries), Peter Fell (AIRS librarian) and Judith Peacock (information literacy co-ordinator).

MGSHS was identified as one of the top ten feeder schools for QUT, and was also approached on the basis of their existing professional links with QUT and the teachers' expressed desire to learn more about information literacy and methods for improving research assignments for their classes. Fifteen MGSHS teaching staff, including a number of heads of department, attended each of the three workshops in the program. Sessions 1 and 2 were conducted in library teaching facilities at Gardens Point campus; Session 3 was held *in situ* at MGSHS.

The evaluation and feedback from participants indicates that *Outreach 2002* was an extremely successful venture. Participants particularly indicated that their enhanced understanding of tertiary content, context and curriculum would prove to be highly beneficial to their future secondary curriculum design and development.

Practitioners at all levels of the educational continuum recognise that graduates of secondary and tertiary institutions require content knowledge and key generic competencies as they enter the changing workforce. These same practitioners also appreciate the critical need for closer curricula bridging between the high school and university.

QUT Library likewise supports the view that information literacy for the community should be addressed at the post-compulsory secondary school level. *Outreach 2002*, using information literacy as the binding mechanism, provided an excellent opportunity for staff from two educational spheres to work together to build learning connections for students. Given the success of the project, it is anticipated that the *Outreach* program will be extended to encompass other major metropolitan secondary schools, particularly in Brisbane's northern corridor.

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