Customer-Focused Innovations at Deakin University Library

Deakin University Library continually seeks new and improved ways to support our students and staff in their teaching, learning and research activities. Continuous quality improvement cycles are supported by benchmarking and other research activities. Ongoing client surveys, user testing and online feedback inform the Library of service gaps and opportunities. Analysis of these wide-ranging services continues to grow and at the same time, student learning needs to be supported with collaborative and contemporary learning spaces. The Library's direction is being informed by the trends observed in our diverse client groups located across multiple campuses, and urban and rural landscapes. Following are some recent initiatives.

Online library

Our redesigned website actively promotes new services. Staff frequently undertake broad environmental scans for new technologies with service efficiency potential, and a new 'indicator window' alerts managers to changing performance within our organisation over time and in relation to our benchmarking partners. Our WebPAC has had a complete makeover, with search and discover entry points beginning at the homepage; a feature for undergraduate students being an easy search for course resources and exam papers. Deakin is a key development partner with Innovative Interfaces Inc in the creation of Encore, a new search tool with elements of Web 2.0 social networking functionality.

Online real-time help

The Library launched Live Help via instant messaging on 16 July to coincide with the busy second semester. Live Help enables all staff and students to ask library-related questions and obtain online help from 10:00am – 4:00pm, Monday to Friday. Instant messaging complements our other forms of assistance: email, phone, online form and in-person services. Live Help is already very popular with over 200 users registering Deakin Library as a 'buddy' in the first fortnight, and assistance has been sought on diverse topics from students

near and far — from within the Library building to Singapore, China and the United Arab Emirates.

Social networking software

The Library is investigating wiki and blog technologies. Our key objective during the initial phase is the development of library staff skills and expertise and the development of in-house applications. These include a wiki to share work procedures, a wiki to collaboratively develop web content and a blog to replace our online staff newsletter. As our understanding of the technologies develops we will seek feedback from Deakin staff and students regarding appropriate library applications to support teaching, learning and research.

Launch at Deakin of Learning 2.0

The Library is undertaking a skills audit, identifying competencies required now and looking forward to 2012. A key initiative for this year is the launch of the Learning 2.0: 23 Things program. Deakin University Library has partnered with Swinburne Library and the staff of both organisations will be undertaking this program.

Student group working on a collaborative project at Deakin University Library

University students and staff need books too ...

A commonly held association with the word 'library' is the word 'books' and yet circulation of our physical collections is in decline. Aware of the small but significant research interest in the long tail of our collections, Deakin is collaborating with five other universities (Ballarat, Melbourne, Newcastle, University of Technology Sydney and Victoria) to aggregate catalogues and make the collections available to our communities of users via the BONUS

scheme. Innovative Interfaces Inc.'s IN-NReach software is enabling ease of access to the collections of partner institutions for undergraduate and postgraduate students, and staff.

ILL services remain a key service for our growing and diverse community of researchers and the VDX (Virtual Document Xchange) software solution is being implemented to expedite the request process.

Learning spaces

Fully aware of the increasing focus on student-centred problem-based learning and the limited supply of physical spaces and equipment available to students to undertake such learning, Deakin University Library prepared a detailed business case for redevelopment of library learning spaces. All funding bids have been successful and major learning space redevelopment for undergraduates and for research postgraduate students will commence in 2008.

In-person assistance

All Deakin University libraries now offer information assistance from a single service point following the resounding success of this model at our Waterfront Campus Library. Loans desk staff provide the initial point of contact for any library query. For complex queries, staff with specific knowledge of our services and resources are readily available to assist further. Allocating resources in this way releases librarians to provide more outreach services to academic staff and postgraduate students and to develop and deliver more innovative information literacy programs using new technologies. Funding has been secured to introduce a student roving service during semester time in 2008.

With a clear focus on customer needs and a keen ear to the messages conveyed in feedback and performance indicators, Deakin University Library is on track to achieve its vision: The Library interconnects people, technology and information to acquire knowledge.

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