Victoria **University Library:** services for **people** with **disabilities**

Victoria University Library is committed to supporting the information needs of all students and staff, recognising the importance of providing a range of basic and specialist assistance services to those who have a disability.

Basic services include assistance with:

- retrieval of items from the shelves
- library catalogue, database or internet searches
- individualised library orientation tours
- use of photocopying facilities.

For those requiring more specialist help, the University offers registration with Disability Services so that they can access the Library's specialist services. Such services could include:

- assistance with complex photocopying (e.g. enlargements)
- extended loan periods on selected items
- use of Disability room (available at 2 Victoria University campuses) and specialist equipment and software
- access to course-related materials in alternative formats (e.g. via Interlibrary loans for Braille or talking books, or conversion of e-reserve materials).

A library contact person is available at each campus as a first point of contact for students and staff as well as helping to provide specialist services.

Victoria University Library has purchased a range of software products which offer screen magnification, speech capabilities, Braille displays and scanning of hardcopy documents for editing, formatting or text-to-speech outputs. The software is available on selected computers across all campus libraries and includes:

- MAGic Pro
- JAWS
- ZoomText
- Omnipage OCR.

Victoria University Library also has some adaptive equipment such as:

- Alphasmart 3000 Notetaker
- Robotron Rainbow
- height adjustable desks.

In support of Victoria University's commitment to teaching and learning in an online environment, the Library endeavours to provide access to web pages that are compliant with World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Accessibility Guidelines and ensures that web-based resources are accessible to all students and staff. This is an ongoing challenge and the library has adopted a flexible approach in response to the needs of those with a disability and providing then with access to information online. This may take the form of making PDF documents available in alternative formats on request.

Library staff find that the key areas of assistance required are for printing and photocopying services, using the autoloaders (e.g. adding credit to print/copy cards), retrieving items from the shelves and providing extended loan periods. Quite often though, students who have a disability are reluctant to relinquish their anonymity, so library staff rely on direct requests for assistance or self-registration with Disability Services in order to provide appropriate services to those that require them. In 2006 students who self-registered for Disability Services made up 2.6% of the overall student population, but the total number of students with a disability who were studying at Victoria University during that year would certainly have been higher.

The importance of effectively promoting the services the library can offer is clearly
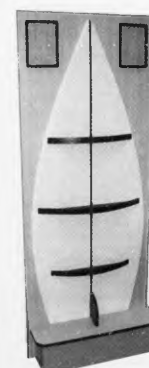

The facilities at Footscray

evident as is the need to offer services that are mindful of the individual's desire to maintain their independence. Happily, the 2007 Library Client Survey reported that library disability services are indeed adequate in meeting client needs, and showing marked improvement compared to previous years. A pleasing result!

Janetta Mascilongo
janetta.mascilongo@vu.edu.au