



Transformation of Library Services in Victorian TAFE's

In recent years, governments have been looking into what is required of the VET system to allow it to respond to changing educational needs, while supporting communities and individuals in gaining the skills they need for the future. Nowhere has there been a corresponding re-assessment of the knowledge resource systems traditionally provided by TAFE library and IT services.

In response, a project was undertaken in 2007 to explore the viability and scope of a Learning Commons Model for Victorian TAFE libraries. This project became a joint undertaking between VATL (Victorian Association of TAFE Libraries) and the Centre for Community Networking Research, Monash University. After initial literature research and ongoing discussions between project team members, it was decided that the Learning Commons model was the one which captured the essence of the role of the TAFE library and its mission in general, and so was chosen as the focus of the research project.

The research project included the use of a wiki, questionnaires and other survey methods and culminated in a search conference which was well attended by representatives of all VATL member libraries.

Some of the issues which were identified centred on the inequities created by the differing levels of access to information resources and the technology needed to support modern learning strategies which exist across TAFE libraries. The most noticeable difference was in the electronic resources and databases available to regional TAFE's in particular, as well as some of the smaller city TAFE's, in comparison to those which can be provided by the larger city TAFE's, including the infrastructure needed to keep these online.

Other issues also centred on staff resourcing and the availability and proximity to training opportunities, particularly in relation to new technologies. This is another important issue which greatly impacts on regional TAFE librarians.

Some of the challenges for VATL in the coming period lie in the continued provision of an appropriate support network, and a representative voice to lobby for change. Providing a modern learning environment is essential for an often forgotten student cohort which comes from varying educational backgrounds and covers a very wide band on the socioeconomic scale.

Further information on the research project and the report <http://www.vatl.org.au/>

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