

Reinventing reference services at the State Library of Queensland

The redeveloped State Library of Queensland building opened to the public in November 2006 amid much celebration. One year later, the State Library of Queensland building was voted Australia's 'building of the year' at the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) Awards.

In the first 12 months of operation, we welcomed over one million visitors to explore five levels of unique spaces offering research, information services and public programs. Colleagues from Australian and overseas libraries have also come to see how we have reinvented our services.

One of the most ambitious changes we made in both the building design and service delivery was the creation of the Infozone. Located on the ground floor, the Infozone aspires to be a relaxed and informal space. One of the first aspects that you notice is the absence of the collections. In the Infozone, you can talk, eat, and drink. It challenges people's perceptions of a state library and even a library. It has been an outstanding success—over 1500 people visit each day

In the Infozone, Reference Services staff rove and provide assistance at the point of need. They also provide a 'triage' type service—they can refer the client to another area of the State Library, if appropriate. To minimise duplication of staff effort and frustration for the client, staff use a referral form which details what collections and items have already been consulted.

One of the most successful new services has been wireless. It is available 24/7 in the Infozone and adjacent ground floor areas, and does not require authentication. It will be extended to the entire building in the next month.

The introduction of the eServices card responds to the principle of empowering clients to do the things they want to do themselves—easily. The eServices card allows clients both onsite and offsite to book a PC, call slip an item, photocopy onsite, authenticate to use online databases, and borrow music material.

The newspaper area is one of the busiest areas of any public library. The Tim Fairfax Newspaper Reading Room provides access to news in all its formats:

- the breaking news is available via a RSS feed from the ABC on a ticker display
- three LCDs provide access to five Foxtel news channels, including CNN
- online newspapers can be accessed from the three PCs
- and of course we have printed newspapers and a microfilm collection.

Recognising that we need to continue to reinvent our services to remain relevant, we have introduced a number of new services in the last 12 months. Instant Messaging provides clients with an alternate way of contacting staff.

Using open-source IM software called Meebo, the widget has been embedded on the Ask us page of the website <http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/Services/ask> and the 'no results found' page on the catalogue so that clients can ask a question and receive assistance immediately. The uptake of the service indicates that we are meeting the need to provide assistance at the 'point of need'.

The legal resources of our reference collection have also been reviewed. Where possible, print resources have been replaced with electronic databases, and many of these resources are now accessible throughout the state. This strategy will be extended to the entire Reference Collection.

The architecture and content of our website is also being reviewed. We have just made our Collections stream available in a new 'look and feel'. No longer is access based on the organisational unit, but through collection themes such as Queensland history, family history, literature, and pictures. Clients are linked to resources in a range of formats and receive options based on faceted searching.

Using One Search, the State Library's new search and discovery service, clients can find books, magazines, newspapers, music maps and online resources. All collections can be searched simultaneously, and there is the opportunity to engage in social networking activities including tagging and reviewing items. In early 2009, our digital collections (pictures, manuscripts and digital stories) will be included in One Search. So, no longer do clients need to be aware of the range of databases available, nor do they need to understand the searching methodology of each database. It is simply one search!

After two years in the redeveloped building, there is now sufficient feedback from clients and statistical evidence to enable us to consider critically services that can be further developed to meet demand and client expectations. Within the context of NSLA's *Re-imagining Library Services Strategic Plan* (2008) and State Library's *Enriching the lives of Queenslanders* (2008) policy, we will continue to review, reassess, respond and reinvent our reference services.

For more information, read SLQ's conference paper presented at *dreaming08*, the ALIA 2008 Biennial Conference, at <http://conferences.alia.org.au/alia2008/> And check out flickr.com to see photos we have submitted, as well as our clients!

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