READ@UTS

Helen Chan and Muriel Bazin share the latest on the University of Technology, Sydney Library's new goal - to create a culture of reading at university.
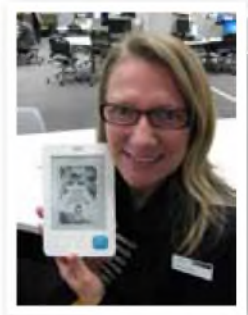
The *Read@UTS* project, which aims to improve student communication skills through reading, arose out of our 2010 strategic planning process. UTS has also identified a growing demand for English language support through the results of the university's Post-Enrolment Language Assessment (PELA) program. The students who performed at lower levels included those with a language background other than English, international students, and new high school graduates. Libraries can help by providing materials and services that encourage students to practise reading and in doing so build up their confidence.

Academic libraries do not traditionally invest in popular fiction however, it is clear that people read when they are engaged and interested in the content. The *Read@ UTS* project involves a number of activities and strategies, one of which is to build a collection of popular fiction and non-fiction materials in digital formats. We believe that these collections will support the development of essential English language skills in reading, listening, speaking and writing. We chose to focus on digital formats to make the content widely and easily accessible. After a careful evaluation process, our Scholarly Information Department selected *OverDrive*, an American digital content provider that specialises in popular ebook and audiobook titles.

OverDrive is priced on a tiered model linked to number of FTE students. Half of the total subscription amount is available to purchase content (ebooks and audiobooks in the case of UTS, although music and video are also available). The other half is the platform hosting fee for the year. Titles are leased for the life of the agreement and can easily be viewed on PCs and Macs, or transferred to a compatible ebook reader. Users may also download free mobile apps to access titles on popular platforms like iPhone, iPad, Android, Blackberry or Windows Phone 7. The library can set the loan period, number of items which may be borrowed and the number of permitted renewals. The titles just disappear or automatically deactivate at the end of the loan period, so there are no late or lost fees to users. Holds may also be placed by users if the desired title is on loan. MARC records are available for purchase from OCLC so that titles are easily accessible via the library's catalogue.

OverDrive was launched at UTS Library at the beginning of June 2011, making us the first Australian academic library to provide this service. The next stage of the project will be concentrated on promotion, publicity and training for staff and students. Staff feedback has been positive at this stage, and the statistics are already showing a quick uptake of the service. You can view our *OverDrive* site at **overdrive.lib.uts.edu.au**.

Sophie McDonald with a Kobo eReader at UTS Library

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