



ENGAGING AND ENTICING USERS

JAN KAYE, Head of Information Resources at Wesley College in Perth, affirms that libraries are still as important as ever, despite the unstoppable march of e-resources into our lives.

Here's the conundrum: on the one hand, as librarians, we are up with the latest, promoting the new, being innovators and instigators ourselves. We are promoting and facilitating electronic resources, our clients are accessing them online via our website, or even through an app that has been customised for our organisation. The data shows that our clients' buy-in to e-resources is increasing. Use public transport and you can see for yourself, with few people reading a print resource, many on their devices, and many of those exhibiting behaviour indicating that they are reading rather than checking emails or listening to music.

On the other hand, where does that leave the usage of our spaces that are filled with resources that don't have an e-prefix in front of them? How do we ensure they are relevant, engaging, enticing, make clients want to come in, stay for a while and come back again and again?

For many of our users, their library is a haven from the rough and tumble of the playground, from constant interruptions from colleagues, from dealing with a bored toddler at home. At Wesley College, we promote our libraries as havens even before a student is enrolled.

When a family touring the school comes to the library, they are welcomed by a staff member and given the message, 'This is your library.' I introduce myself to the parents and the child, talk about the facilities, and ask the child what they read. Whatever they say, I make a connection with what we have to offer. 'You don't read? Well, it must be because you haven't found the right book, so we'll find that for you.'



Students met the author of Galactic Hot Dogs via Skype and celebrated by enjoying hot dogs for lunch.

In addition, from 2016 we are offering borrowing rights to e-resources to students six months before starting at Wesley. The family makes a physical connection during their visit and an introductory online connection, and we start to build a profile of the student as a user. Win-win.

The library furniture and the spacing of it is flexible, and changes are made based on needs and interests. If a venue is required for an event, we offer the library, as long as other users can be accommodated and furniture and shelving can be easily moved. (And let me put in a plug for shelves on wheels.) Movies are filmed in the library; speakers present to large groups; all staff come for morning tea at the end of each term; Code Club, Book Club, lunchtime games, Silent Reading happen just by moving chairs and writing the temporary use of the space on a whiteboard.

We know that some of the strategies used by supermarkets work for libraries. Independent supermarkets ask customers to post suggestions for new products; so do we. Just as supermarkets are diversifying with sushi bars and cafes, when our research indicated that MakerSpace was a genuine fit with, and relevant to, libraries, we facilitated a makerspace in the library.

Seeking opportunities to maintain user engagement is a continuous process. Our latest venture is a bright red bay of borrowable DVDs near the front door so that even the most adamant 'I don't read' student may be enticed into the library and, once enticed, engaged by the space, the resources and the staff.

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