

# QULOC CELEBRATE 25 YEARS OF COLLABORATION

**T**he Queensland University Libraries Office of Cooperation (QULOC) recently celebrated 25 years of libraries working together, proving that great things can be achieved when the talents of librarians are combined. JUSTINE CAWLEY reports.

The Brisbane University Libraries Office of Cooperation (BULOC) formed in 1991 by agreement between the libraries of the University of Queensland, Queensland University of Technology and Griffith University. Focussed on providing opportunities for collaboration and sharing of information and knowledge between members, the organisation proved a success, and in 1993 it expanded with new members from outside Brisbane; it was rebranded as the Queensland University Libraries Office of Cooperation (QULOC).

In June 2016, QULOC commemorated its 25th anniversary with an afternoon forum at the Queensland College of Art at South Bank and an anniversary dinner at a nearby restaurant, which gave members past and

present the opportunity to come together to celebrate the many achievements of the organisation.

The forum, devised by QULOC's governing University Librarians' Committee, was themed around collaboration and change, and attendees enjoyed an afternoon of informative presentations. The first speaker was Mitchell Whitelaw, Associate Professor, Digital Design Practice, School of Art at the Australian National University. In his presentation, 'Collaboration and Digital Collections', Mitchell reflected on a series of research collaborations he had worked on with libraries and other collecting institutions, and he outlined the opportunities and perils of each of these projects. Mitchell, with a background as a designer, artist and musician, discussed his work with digital data and outlined the way his work manipulates data as a creative material, a critical material and a collaborative material.

'Manly Images', a collaboration with the State Library of NSW in 2012, aimed to develop a model to change the way image collections in local libraries could be celebrated and made available to wider audiences. The code used for the project was made available via GitHub, with the intention that this would make it easier for other libraries to use the code for similar projects. But Mitchell said that this had not happened, and he added that a lack of technical expertise in using code in libraries was a barrier to similar projects being undertaken.

'Discover the Queenslander', a project undertaken with the State Library of Queensland in 2014, used a digitised collection of pages and covers from *The*



Mitchell Whitelaw presenting to QULOC members. Photo: Bobby Rein Photography



Post-forum cocktail reception. Photo: Bobby Rein Photography

*Queenslander*, the colour supplement publication of the *Brisbane Courier*. The project developed a web interface for the collection, using a tiled mosaic technique that allows for easy browsing by date, topic or colour.

One of the key lessons Mitchell learned through his work was that data always has provenance; it has always come from somewhere, belongs to someone and will connect us to part of the world. This fact – that data is a great vector or connection – has added richness to the collaborations that Mitchell has worked on.


The second presentation was a panel discussion between Malcolm Wolski, Director of eResearch Services at Griffith University, and Andrew Bowness, Manager of Support Services and eResearch Services at Griffith University. Facilitated by Louise Howard, Director of Library and Learning Services at Griffith University, the panel looked the way in which eResearch Services supports research at Griffith University and the impact that effective collaboration between e-research and information professionals can have on the research process. At Griffith University, eResearch Services provides IT support for researchers and works to ensure researchers have the skills to use research tools and technologies effectively. The work of the group often overlaps with the university's library services, and the two services work together to provide a comprehensive and cohesive service.

The last two presentations were reflective talks that celebrated QULOC's rich history of collegiality and information sharing between its member libraries.

Wendy Abbott held the position of QULOC Executive Officer from 1993 to 1994. Now University Librarian at Bond University, Wendy looked back on her time working with QULOC and the impact the organisation had on its member libraries. Graham Black, currently the Associate Vice-Chancellor, South-East Queensland Region at CQUniversity, reminisced on his time as convenor of QULOC from 2008 to 2010.

Following the presentations, attendees enjoyed drinks, canapés and an opportunity to network in the Queensland College of Art's gallery foyer. Current and former QULOC executive and university librarians carried the nostalgia into the evening as they dined at Stokehouse Q restaurant on the Brisbane River and exchanged stories of their experiences of collaboration and change in the library profession over the past 25 years.

The celebrations have come to an end, but QULOC will continue to lead the way, providing many valuable opportunities for its members to share knowledge, work collaboratively on projects and learn from each other.

You can watch the videos from the QULOC 25th Anniversary Forum on the QULOC YouTube channel at [bit.ly/29mh53k](http://bit.ly/29mh53k). 

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