Lessons Learned

ALIA Academic and Research Libraries WA ran four thought-provoking events during 2016. Members took away several useful and interesting lessons, as the group reports.

1. Student prizes, Central Institute of Technology, Perth, March 2016

Winners of the Anne Clyde Memorial Prize for Best Research Essay (Diane Ingram and Gaye McEwan) and Prize for Best Practicum (Sian Dewar and Irena Fitzsimon) spoke of their work.

WHAT WE LEARNED

- Before researching, know your community and its needs. Make use of skill sharing and technology.
- 3D printing is more than one technology and we need to keep in mind that highly experienced staff are needed to maintain it.
- Researching can be fun, and you can surprise yourself. Through researching, you become an instant expert.
- While on practicum we need to interact with librarians, be enthusiastic and value whichever library we are placed in. Be organised, be on time and learn as much as possible. Join plenty of groups and be a library advocate.

2. 'LibCollab' LibGuide, University of Notre Dame, Fremantle, 23 June 2016

Thirty-two people attended this event, joining in the discussions across five different tables and subjects, which included technology (accessibility, coding, and tools), design (usability, aesthetics, and function), purpose (instructional or pathfinder), users (perspectives around function and value) and alternatives (other platforms and products)

WHAT WE LEARNED

- Consider setting up a WAGUL (Western Australian Group of University Libraries) code-sharing site, ensuring when testing guides that good protocols are used. Know the implications of what you edit before editing.
- Always keep accessibility and standards at the forefront of your mind. Watch for broken links and always consider your users' needs.
- Experiment! Consider removing the guides and see what is missed. Work with students to find out what they need, include assignment-specific information and change it frequently.
- Include users in the design process through ideas such as focus groups. Ensure a LibGuide is written for your audience. Should it be specialist or generic?

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- Who is to blame for LibGuide mediocrity – librarian or LibGuide? Is the reason for mediocrity that we stopped asking questions? We always need to think outside the template.

3. Library Data Carpentry, Curtin University, 31 August 2016

Speakers included Matthias Liffers, who explained the concepts behind Library Data Carpentry. Janice Chan gave examples of tools and lessons learned, while Jackie Stevens drew attention to inspirational works in data visualisation, particularly the work of speaker Kate Sweetapple and her students. Kate's alternative taxonomy for birds ('obnoxious', 'violent' and 'annoying') was a highlight.

WHAT WE LEARNED

- Develop expertise in coding (for example, Python, OpenRefine, and APIs)
- Understand how important it is to extract meaning from data. Question whether the data analytics function should be within the library.

4. Creating Impact in Library Spaces, University of Western Australia (UWA), 30 November 2016

UWA (University of Western Australia) Library opened a newly refurbished collaborative study space in Reid Library, and a group of over 40 attendees had a chance to tour this space before the panel discussion in the Circle, an innovative flexible presentation space.

Panel members were invited to share their thoughts on trends and best practice in designing library spaces. Speakers included Jill Benn (University Librarian, UWA), Amanda Bellenger (Curtin University), Jan Rutherford (Edith Cowan University), Cheryl Parrott (City of Perth Library) and Sue Hutley (University Librarian, Queensland University of Technology).

WHAT WE LEARNED

- Engage with clients to understand their needs and expectations; communicate information about change and create excitement.
- Consider replacing print books with ebooks to create more learning spaces.
- Gather statistics so you have data on which to base any future decisions. Ensure you have an understanding of the amount of work involved in redesigning library spaces.