

Teaching and technology

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In the last two years, the Department of Library and Information Science at Edith Cowan University has reviewed its teaching programs, and has developed new units to reflect the demands of a technology information environment. Further, some new courses of study have been introduced, offering the opportunity to use technology in innovative ways as both curriculum focus, and as teaching tools.

Technology strongly links to the teaching content of all programs. Course units now explore the ways in which information access and sources affect our services and strategies as information providers. 'Reference service', for example, explores the ways technology may be used to better connect the user with the required information, including the evaluation and use of electronic information sources. Many units also explore multimedia and information technology implications for information services. The Department is fortunate in having a number of highly regarded multimedia experts in the group, and this has led to a melding of the two disciplines of librarianship and information technology in innovative ways.

Students are encouraged to develop a broad range of technology competencies, ranging from basic word-processing, spread sheet construction and database management, to more intricate aspects of developing multimedia packages, web pages, using HTML language protocols, and developing effective display and graphic presentation techniques. We are also able to explore the potential application of technology in the provision of information services in the knowledge that students will also have the technical expertise to ensure high quality services are created.

Course delivery methods have also altered significantly. While on-campus classes remain an important form of teaching, the units are increasingly presented in electronic form on the Web. Students are able to access lecture presentations, notes and other information from classes, or the full set of teaching notes provided to external students. CD-ROM versions are also under preparation. We manage our own home page, and endeavour to communicate with students and colleagues as thoroughly as possible through these means. Our Web page can be explored at <<http://liswww.fste.ac.cowan.edu.au/>>.

Communication with external students is a major priority at Edith Cowan University. Students are provided with free access to our Virtual Campus, and may dial in from home to connect with fellow students, access the library services, and use any of the Internet facilities with which the University enables connection. The Virtual Campus has operated for some years and provides significant support to students.

Increasingly, lecturers in this department are finding themselves providing a wide range of continuing education programs with a technology flavour. This semester alone, courses offered to professionals include 'Navigating the Internet'; 'Introduction to Web authoring with HTML'; 'Image scanning and manipulation'; 'Introduction to digital video'; 'Developing your school library home page'; 'Information technology planning in schools'; 'Information literacy in an electronic environment'; and 'Introduction to photoshop'.

Our commitment to the integration of technology and the development of competencies in technology usage is also evident in the joint ALIA/Edith Cowan University continuing education programs currently offered to members of ALIA and the library community. These programs relate to new areas of technology such as 'Advances in information technology'; 'Selection of electronic resources'; and 'Upgrading search strategy skills'.

Technology is a focus of teaching, as well as a means of enhancing our teaching. Students leaving our courses, be they library technician, teacher librarian or information specialist, will be proficient in both managing information processes, and anticipating new trends and their implications.

Our goal is to create forward thinkers who see technology as a tool for development and growth. In particular, we are committed to developing graduates who look to the future with excitement, recognising the potential worth of technology, and the ways in which it will facilitate the linking of information to users through a vast array of forums.

Technology is fundamental to the Library and Information Science teaching program at Edith Cowan University. It provides us with the means, the focus and the future for information work. ■

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