Rockingham breaching the distance

Question: How to ensure Rockingham Challenger TAFE staff and students retain ownership of their Library when relocated to another part of the education precinct?

This was the problem facing Library staff at Rockingham Regional Campus Community Library when a new purpose built library was completed ten years ago to house the collections of three diverse organizations; the City of Rockingham, Murdoch University and Challenger TAFE. The library had been located within the Rockingham Challenger TAFE existing buildings and although the Library is only 600 metres down a pathway that links the Challenger TAFE and Murdoch University Campus, it could be 600 kilometres away as far as some members of the Rockingham TAFE campus community are concerned.

Answer: Continual hard work and innovation.

It requires a little more planning for lecturers to pop into the Library with their students and it is hard for students to fill in half an hour between classes in the Library. However, Library staff are committed to overcoming the tyranny of distance.

Every opportunity to attend staff meetings, Orientation days and other social occasions arranged by Challenger TAFE are taken by the Library staff. The personal contacts and friendships formed between Library staff, TAFE staff and students has been most rewarding and useful. One of the early initiatives to encourage personal contact was for each Library staff member to be allocated a subject area, with the aim of getting to know the staff and build on personal relationships.

Library staff offer orientation classes for new students; introducing them to the library and showing them the services and facilities available. These classes are friendly and include quizzes and practical activities to help the students feel confident in the library environment. The Library also offers specific classes at the request of lecturers on topics such as; using the Library catalogue, journal databases and the Internet. Some of the Internet classes have involved helping students find appropriate sites to gain employment, Occupational Health and Safety and Industry Standards information. Emphasis has been placed on remote access for the Library catalogue and databases.

TAFE lecturers assist Library staff to update and select new material. One of the regular features organised by the Librarians has been a Bookfair at which book suppliers are invited. While mingling with library staff, lecturers are encouraged to attend the Bookfairs, browsing through material so that they can suggest titles for purchase by the Library.

The Library has a large exhibition area and regularly exhibits the TAFE art exhibition where it can be viewed by the wider public.

We are hoping to permanently house a work of art by the Kadadjiny Mia Centre for Aboriginal Learning Challenger TAFE class.

The Library facilities are used across the disciplines; in particular the e-library (a computer training room) which is booked by lecturers on a regular basis. Even the Apprentice Mechanical students use the e-library to review a Car Maintenance and Repair Database that had been provided on a trial basis.

Keeping up the communication between all staff has been imperative. New book lists created through the catalogue are advertised and the staff can communicate with the Library by email or phone if needing specific items from the collection or on inter-campus loan. Journals are circulated to TAFE staff to allow them the convenience of viewing Library material in their office and a courier operates daily between the campus and library.

Read Write Now which operates out of the Rockingham TAFE campus has a dedicated room in the Library with a large number of resources aimed at assisting students with literacy.

Rockingham Library has continued to offer their TAFE patrons an ever improving library service despite the perceived tyranny of distance.

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