



Pathway to information literacy: Teaching Indigenous Learners unit at Charles Darwin University Library

Teaching Indigenous Learners is a core third year unit of Charles Darwin University's Bachelor of Teaching and Learning degree, aimed at equipping Education students, who are mostly non-indigenous, with the skills to teach Indigenous learners ranging in age from early childhood to adulthood. It is likely that once these students graduate some will be employed in teaching roles in Northern Territory, including remote indigenous communities. Topics covered in the unit include: *Historical perspectives of Indigenous education, Indigenous education in the Northern Territory, Diverse experience of education, Health and education in the school community, Language and culture, Literacy and numeracy in the classroom, Effective approaches to indigenous education, Community and urban schools and classrooms.* Lecturer, Dr Linda Ford, invited Liaison Librarians, Kaye Henderson, (School of Australian Indigenous Knowledge Systems – SAIKS) and Jessie Mahjouri (School of Education) to embed Information Literacy into her unit. Linda is very supportive of libraries and recognises that her students need to have information literacy skills, not only for this unit, but for when they qualify as teachers. Linda says that "good teaching is always backed up by good research and literature". It is envisaged that the information literacy skills learnt in this unit will then be passed onto their own students once they graduate and are employed as teachers, therefore continuing the pathway of learning information literacy.

In semester one, the unit is run externally using Learnline, the University's learning management software, for delivering external units over the Internet. The students are welcomed to the unit, by Dr Linda Ford, using a podcast, with Linda speaking in the traditional Mak Mak language, English and the audio is also transcribed. Kaye and Jessie have developed the concept of 'the learning pathway'. Students are led along the pathway aimed at making them efficient and effective users of online resources. The pathway starts by recommending students revise the basic skills, undertaking a series of online researching skills tutorials. These can be found at the following link <http://learnline.cdu.edu.au/researchingskills/> Examples of how students can extend their research are woven into the topic content. Suggestions of specific databases and keywords that might provide good results are inserted at the point of need, therefore making the students searching experience relevant to their studies. Simple but effective modelling techniques such as screen dumps of search boxes from Informit, Ebsco and CrossSearcher, the library's federated search tool are included with relevant examples of search statements placed in the appropriate fields. Students are encouraged to be persistent and not to give up. Links to Ask Us, the library's online help service are provided. The unit's discussion board, where students can ask questions, is monitored by Kaye and Jessie, and the library questions are

answered as required. Assistance has been given to Linda in locating copyright cleared photographs to help enhance the cultural awareness of her topics and generate discussion by the students and herself.

Students have also been introduced to community 'network' resources such as the Northern Territory Library and Knowledge Centres, which were recipients of the Bill and Melinda Gates Access to Learning award in 2007. Making students aware of the 'information' resources they will have available to them, once they become teachers out in the communities is an important aspect of the learning experience. Some of these Homeland communities are quite remote and are regularly isolated, cut off by road and air due to monsoonal weather and flooding.

Jessie and Kaye have found the experience of embedding information literacy in to Teaching Indigenous Learners to be professionally rewarding.

We have worked with and learnt from Linda, who is very knowledgeable, an authority, in her field, as well as working with IT staff to learn the technical aspects of Learnline. In addition, we found that we were broadening Linda's knowledge of databases and library resources in general. We also learnt how to tailor the library resources to a unit of study's need and meeting the unit's assessment requirements. We look forward to using this new model for other core units in higher education, here at Charles Darwin University Library.

Kaye Henderson
kaye.henderson@cdu.edu.au

Jessie Mahjouri
jessie.mahjouri@cdu.edu.au
Liaison and Information Literacy Librarians

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library Information and Resource Network or ATSILIRN for short

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia are diverse in their cultures, histories and languages, making their information requirements equally diverse. Australia has over 200 distinct Aboriginal groups, plus the peoples of the Torres Strait where approximately 100 languages are still spoken. There is also an increase in Indigenous authors writing not only in English but also in their own languages, such as Pitjantjatjara, Yolngu and Aranda. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are strong within themselves, but trying to navigate through the library and archival worlds can be difficult.

ATSILIRN was established after it was recognised that there was a need for a support and information network for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in libraries and for those people servicing the information needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We do this via conferences, our web site, and newsletters.