

Engaging with the community within: an academic library perspective

In her September 2006 *inCite* article, Angela Bieniek reported on Charles Sturt University (CSU) Library's achievements in encouraging community participation, and the positive feedback received through a 2006 Australian Universities Quality Agency report. The report found the University to be "regarded very positively as being a proactive leader of development where it sees a community need, while at the same time being willing to listen and respond to initiatives that community representatives might propose".

While the article demonstrated CSU Library's active role in the external community, the Library also has a vital role to play within its own University community.

In CSU's 2007-2011 strategic plan, the concept of 'One University' was introduced, marking a significant departure from the traditional campus-based mentality, bringing together the disparate elements of the institution.

The Division of Library Services soon realised that the Library, although still providing high quality support for learning and teaching in a print environment, was less able to support services in the complex and rapidly evolving electronic world. It was also felt that support for the University's new emphasis on research was under-developed.

The change of thinking meant a complete restructure of the Division. The Library has moved away from the traditional campus-based structure to a model which removes duplication of services where face-to-face delivery is non-essential; more in keeping with the achievement of the University's strategic goals.

Other exciting ways the CSU Library is working to engage the University community include the implementation of a Faculty Liaison Service and the creation of Learning Commons.

The Faculty Liaison Service was established to communicate between the Library and University faculty,

helping match library services and resources to academic requirements. The Faculty Liaison Librarians, based at the Albury-Wodonga, Bathurst, Orange and Wagga Campuses, offer one-on-one training in the use of library resources and support to staff and researchers. It is envisioned that the Liaison Service will strengthen inter-relationships in learning and teaching between the Schools and Divisions, and provide unprecedented support for the University's research endeavours. The Faculty Liaison



Librarians also work closely with course co-ordinators and the Centre for Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (CELT) educational designers, to embed information literacy and research skills into curriculum materials.

The establishment of Learning Commons is a response to changes in the way students behave, learn, and are taught. These changes have resulted in declining physical visits to the library, a decline in the lending of the physical collection and a corresponding exponential growth in the usage of the electronic collection. Learning Commons bring together all of the university's services – the Library, Division of Information Technology, and Student Services in a single point of access to assistance.

CSU Library currently has a physical Learning Commons on Bathurst Campus that offers 24/7 access to computer workstations and wireless Internet in a comfortable environment complete with café and vending machines. It is a student-centred learning space that provides seamless access to the University's information resources which support all flexible learning

methodologies that students may require now and in the future. It is a communal space for individual and collaborative study in an informal and comfortable setting, which provides a single point of access to support services such as information literacy, learning support, research support, and IT support.

More Learning Commons are planned for other campuses with attention now turning to the development of virtual learning commons that provide for one point of entry. The proposed virtual learning commons will cater to the 70% of students who are off-campus, bringing together students from across the country and around the world while providing a service that is equitable with that available to on-campus students.

Academic libraries have an important part to play in the scholarly learning process and the changes occurring across all campuses of CSU are merely the beginning. The role of the library is of paramount importance – a tool by which to engage with all facets of the university community.

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