tagging to provide another way for clients to browse by popular keywords.

Clients can search or browse for information literacy objects in the InfoSkills Bank database by several fields, as well as a keyword tag cloud. The size of the font in the tag cloud indicates the relative popularity of a term.

Filter learning objects

Faculty:

All

Type of student:

All

Resource Type:

All

Filter | Reset

Popular keywords

captivate
Catalogue
construction
database
databases
law
Lesson Plan
research skills
research sources
tutorial

At present only library staff are able to tag objects in InfoSkills Bank, but it is hoped in future enhancements we will be able to allow clients to add keywords, ratings, and comments. This will not only assist clients in locating the most useful information literacy objects, based on the opinions of their peers, it will provide feedback to library staff about our information literacy programs which can be used to improve the design and delivery of our face-to-face and online teaching.

From the staff point of view, InfoSkills Bank is a simple to use, but powerful, administrative tool to which it is easy to upload objects with accompanying descriptive metadata and designate as public or restricted. This will result in considerable efficiencies for staff as they will be able to store their teaching materials in a central location, maintain version control, and publish and unpublish materials as required. The time savings for library staff in preparing, storing, and managing their teaching material will be considerable.

Another benefit for library staff is the opportunity to share information literacy materials and learn from each other. InfoSkills Bank opens up the wide range of material our staff design and prepare, allowing ideas to be shared and best practice examples to be re-used.

Next steps for InfoSkills Bank will include developing learning pathways which will present the materials in InfoSkills Bank in organised modules to serve different client groups. This will provide a means to direct clients into self-paced pathways which will guide them through a series of activities and tutorials which will build their information literacy skills. This will continue the work already commenced in InfoSkills Bank of providing learning materials to our clients to assist them in becoming independent learners.

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UTS library gets social – using social media to connect with users

In academic libraries we can no longer expect that clients will find and use our library website, and it is becoming increasingly important to connect with our clients anywhere, anytime. This means moving beyond both the physical library building and the 'walled garden' of the library and university websites, into the mobile and social platforms which our clients are using.

At UTS library we are experimenting in a number of ways to discover how social media and mobile platforms might allow us to offer our services in ways which meet our users in their space.

Follow us

Recently we have created Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube accounts for UTS Library. These enable us to promote our services and communicate with clients in a way not previously possible. Our Facebook fans can comment on our updates or share them with their friends, add their thoughts to our discussion board, and respond to each other online. Using social media, our news and marketing channels have therefore become interactive spaces, allowing us to gather immediate feedback from clients.

As we grow our presence in these spaces, we'll be experimenting further with the types of content we add to the pages, ways to encourage dialogue with our clients, and even between clients as a space in which they can share knowledge with their peers.

Extending our audience

Beyond our existing client base, social media allows us to extend to new and broader audiences. At UTS one of our goals is enhancing the first year experience and helping students transition to university. At the library, social media provides one small way in which we can help achieve this. We know many new university students find navigating both the physical and virtual spaces of university challenging because of the unfamiliar systems they need to use. However they are probably using Facebook and Twitter, so we can build contextual links from these familiar spaces, into our library website, catalogue, and databases as a way to ease students into an understanding of information resources and research skills; hopefully in a way which is fun, informal, and engaging!

Going mobile

As we build our social media content we are also exploring other avenues to connect with our users and leverage new technology to improve services. We have been offering an instant messaging reference service since early 2008, with positive response from clients, and often find clients are contacting us from inside the library. This year we will be trialling the use of mobile devices with our reference desk staff to provide reference assistance across all five levels of our City Campus library. This is an extension of our existing Student Rovers service which provides basic assistance to clients beyond the reference desk. With the addition of mobile devices to this service we can provide a better level of service to clients anywhere in the library building.

Developing new services and exploring technology also provides opportunities for collaboration. As part of a collaborative project with the UTS Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology we are experimenting with mobile applications, starting with a mapping application which will allow clients to locate where an item is held via their mobile phone.

Into the Future

These are just a few of the early steps UTS library is taking as it begins planning for its 'Library of the Future', which encapsulates both a new library building to open in 2015, and a new way of conceptualising library service. As we begin to explore what services will look like, engaging with our clients and leveraging technology to meet client expectations provide important sign posts along the way.

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