



## FOUR LESSONS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF EXPERIENCE

Macquarie University has just completed a new library building that features Australia's first Automated Storage and Retrieval System (ASRS). It's been a huge undertaking, taking two years and costing a total of \$97m - and the team have learned some valuable lessons along the way.

The use of automated storage and retrieval systems has become increasingly common in major universities and libraries in the USA and Europe but Macquarie University is the first Australian library to install the technology.

University Librarian Maxine Brodie said the decision to install the system was part of creating a library that would be able to meet client needs for decades to come.

The ASRS system uses four stacker cranes to access steel storage bins housing 1.3 million items in less than a seventh of the floor space that would be required using traditional shelving. This has meant the library's entire collection is now located on one site for the first time - and there's room to grow.

Dematic's Manager Direct & Wholesale, Darren Rawlinson, said implementing the ASRS at Macquarie University had been a pleasant change from working in warehouses and distribution centres.

"It was exciting to work on such a ground-breaking project in Australia. Macquarie University's new library is world class in every area, and we are proud to have played a part in bringing Australia's first automated library storage and retrieval solution online."

The installation of automated retrieval is only one of a number of technological and architectural innovations in the Macquarie University Library project, which was

officially opened by Chancellor Michael Egan and Vice Chancellor Professor Stephen Schwartz on Monday August 8, 2011.

"Based on overseas experience with automated library storage and retrieval systems, we expect the easy, convenient access the ARC provides will actually increase book lending rates over time," said Ms Brodie.

"I'm thrilled to be a part of it. It's a real investment in the future of the University and our students."



University Librarian Maxine Brodie with Australia's first automated storage and retrieval system at Macquarie University

*INCITE asked Macquarie University Library's Communications Coordinator Brendan Krige to share the four most important lessons the Macquarie team learnt during the project.*

### **Have clarity about what you want**

There will be many things that arise in the long process of building a new library that will distract you from your original plans. Refer back to your strategic aims and business needs to ensure your project is meeting your needs, not the wants of others.

### **Expect setbacks along the way**

While building projects are notorious for delays, it's not just bad weather that causes setbacks. A broken crane at a port delayed vital ASRS equipment, and then the Japanese tsunami affected the supply of photocopiers and printers. There were also changes in key staff that impacted the project.

### **You can't please everyone all the time**

There are hundreds of decisions that need to be made in a new library project, and not everyone will like your furniture choices, colour schemes, floor plans - the list goes on. Make the best decision you can based on the research and evidence you have (and your budget of course).

### **Build it and they will come!**

Even with seating and computer capacity doubled, staff were hearing the old refrain, "I can't find a seat anywhere" within two weeks of opening. In the first month of operation, Macquarie's new library saw the average daily door count soar to over 9,000 visits, compared to an average of around 5,000 for the old library. Where were all these students before? (Who says libraries are obsolete?)

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