

# HELPING STUDENTS FIND NEW RESOURCES

**W**hat happens if the library users come – but they don't look in the right place? Academic libraries are changing. While this is not new to librarians, Jennifer Murphy says users haven't caught up yet with all that has been happening. Targeted promotion can help.

Academic library students have noticed some changes with the increase of flexible learning spaces, couches and cafes, and the extra services which are offered through library partners, such as for writing and careers support. Victoria University, Melbourne Library has opened several facilities that support such student learning, the latest being the Footscray Nicholson Learning Commons in 2012.

But behind the scenes there have been less visible changes which are now impacting on student use of the library resources. Academic libraries are now building collections of electronic books for use by students and teaching staff. The benefits are that they can be viewed from any location with internet access including by students studying overseas, multiple students can access them at the same time, and they don't take up shelf space.

Patron-driven acquisition models are also available from some ebook providers, giving library users a role in assisting with the selection of electronic books for the library collection. Academic librarians don't assume to have all the knowledge in a subject area, so why not let teaching staff and students choose the most relevant books for their particular specialist area?

All this sounds good, you might be thinking. So what's the problem?

Past user feedback has indicated that students are coming to the library shelves but not finding what they need for their study or research. The relevant print books have already been checked and the remaining books are sometimes seen as too old to support a particular area of interest.

The students aren't looking in the right place. We have provided access to electronic books, but they generally have not been found by the students. How can we assist students to start looking in the right place for books? How can they be led back to the computer to access books in electronic format?

In response to this issue, the library at Victoria University, Melbourne began a program of promoting electronic books. This campaign includes updating online user guides, physical reminders using shelf wobblers encouraging users to look for books online, 20 minute user education sessions at all

campuses to increase awareness of electronic books and advise students on where to get further assistance, and some printed material. It doesn't stop there either because how will students know about the training? Twitter, Facebook, directed emails, website advertising, and announcements on the day are all part of our communication strategy. The message has been 'If you can't find a book on the shelves or you are looking for new books, try an ebook.'

I can't tell you whether the campaign has been effective as yet as it is still underway, but it's already clear that the language which accompanies ebooks – terms such as access, full text online content, book readers, downloading, ebook providers, and platforms – is becoming more familiar to all library staff. This will certainly benefit the users as they navigate the academic library electronic book environment.

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