

# Innovative industry partnerships: bucking the traditional practicum placement model

**S**haring an industry placement achieves substantial, tangible results for the host and provides a rewarding, real-world experience for the students, writes REBECCA SHILLINGTON.

Adrenaline surged as Murdoch University confirmed its interest in building on the 2017 concurrent placement experience that saw seven Curtin University library and information science students work collaboratively for three weeks to improve the library's renowned science-fiction collection (see 'Message from the Martians' by Dawn McLoughlin in *INCITE* v.38 i.11/12).

Due to the success of the program in 2017, the 2018 applications had far more students responding to the call for the 'creation of engaging, interactive digital promotional material', than Murdoch University Library could possibly host. After meticulous vetting by the staff from both universities, five postgraduate students were selected for the 2018 program. Last year's concurrent placement had been a tremendous success and everyone involved wondered if that success could be repeated with a different brief and a new group of students. Only time would tell – three weeks to be exact.

Curtin library and information science students have historically participated in a variety of practicum placements with dedicated industry partners, some concurrent. However, more often than not this means students are placed with one or more library and information science students from different tertiary library and information science programs and with different teams in the host organisation. By contrast, the Murdoch inspired program enables a substantial, tangible output in part because students work as a team, with a common goal. The model provides the opportunity for industry partners to take a proactive approach to programming, particularly project output. This collaborative approach provides a genuine opportunity for students to challenge themselves, to truly experience workplace integrated learning, and to foster and build key graduate attributes.

The team dynamics of the selected students proved encouraging. They worked swiftly to unite and come to terms with the brief. Along this journey staff noted the compression of Tuckman's (1965) four stages of group development – forming, storming, norming, and performing. The students worked solidly to 'form' and 'storm' as they came to grips with the task and became familiar with the special collections, and the 'norm' of

working out who would do what and how, saw the output increase. They then came together to 'perform' – by creating a highly professional digital learning object, soon to be made available on the Murdoch University website. The students emerged from this experience ready to cross the bridge into the profession.

Feedback has been excellent from all involved, and the digital learning object is being actively used to promote Murdoch's special collections. Another benefit is that there is genuine interest from other industry partners in establishing a similar collaborative program in the future. 🌟

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