

## **Inclusion and diversity : collaboration as a strategy for success at the University of Newcastle Library.**

**Greg Anderson, University Librarian, University of Newcastle**  
**Marion Wilson, Associate Librarian, University of Newcastle**

### **Abstract**

At the University of Newcastle Library collaboration has been both a planning principle and a driver for achievement for some time. While collaboration has often been the only way we in libraries have been able to harness resources to achieve some of our works in the past, it has not been a cynical strategy. Collaboration brings with it great opportunities for reciprocal and informal learning, and for the opening up of avenues for further facilities and services we may otherwise never have known existed.

The demographic profile of our community is extremely diverse, and the provision of generic services and facilities would appear not to be in the best interests of a quality student experience. However generic is what we are forced to provide; we need to ensure that we are both inclusive in that we provide for all, and diverse in our service delivery and approach. In other words, all things to all people!

## **The Library Profile**

The University of Newcastle Library is central to the University's academic and community endeavour, and operates through four library buildings, as well as a rapidly expanding online environment. Library Services is heavily involved in supporting flexible and online delivery, with systems to ensure that students located remotely and internationally can readily access information resources, learning support and information literacy services.

We operate via joint libraries with TAFE at the Ourimbah and Port Macquarie campuses. Partnerships with the Hunter/New England and the Northern Sydney/Central Coast Area Health Services mean that we provide support to library services at the teaching hospitals and University Departments of Remote and Rural Health at various country locations. This includes support for staff positions, and provision of a catalogue system. Through our catalogue, NEWCAT we have a union catalogue of the holdings of the libraries of seventeen hospital and health service libraries, of the Hunter region, and more broadly across country NSW.

Over 60,000 journals are available electronically, and Short Loans Online ensures that essential coursework readings are available 24 hours a day. The University's Cultural Collections, including Archives, Rare Books, and Local Studies, are also part of the Library's responsibilities.

In a series of restructures since 1996 we have progressively lost over a third of our staff. In 1996 the library staff profile was 155 EFT, providing a library service across four branches, opening for 83 hours a week. There were no online resources, so access to information was restricted to opening hours.

In 2006, 91 EFT staff operated significantly expanded services, with opening hours in one library of 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Online resources account for the bulk of expenditure on information resources, so information is available 24 hours a day, either in the Library, or remotely from home.

Total EFT population served in 1996 was 15,785 ; in 2005/6, it was 19,792, so approximately 42% fewer staff now provide more services and facilities to a population group which has expanded by almost a quarter. This circumstance, combined with the changing landscape of scholarly publishing and information delivery, prompted us to look harder at the way we deliver service and content. Collaboration and partnership were the only ways we could sustain services and develop new initiatives.

## **The University of Newcastle profile**

Looking at the diversity of the population at the University of Newcastle, we find

- The highest rate of socioeconomic disadvantage of all Australian Universities. 27.4% of the student cohort is in the lowest socioeconomic bracket nationally.
- Only 40% of the first year intake in 2007 are school leavers. We have shown similar cohorts in previous years. Thinking of our student cohorts as Generation X/Y or Millenials is too general to ensure that we are developing services and facilities that meet the needs of the bulk of our students.
- International students, with different experiences and expectations from the home grown ones, are a small, fluctuating, yet extremely important cohort.
- Distance education students make up almost 4% of total student enrolment. These students need exciting and supportive virtual learning spaces, as well as ( or instead of) physical buildings.
- Strong support for indigenous teaching and learning. The Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies supports the most comprehensive range of Indigenous studies programs in Australia, from enabling courses to postgraduate studies. Approximately

2% of student intake is Indigenous, across all programs, not just Indigenous studies. A particular area of strength is the Bachelor of Medicine, which currently has 25 Indigenous students enrolled.

- A broad community base – as a research university with a regional responsibility we have strong community-wide links. We are, largely by default, a regional archives repository, with large business, personal and institutional archives. We support regional area health services, and regional schools, and are developing collaborative services with public libraries.

With such a diverse community profile to serve and support, any planning which caters solely to a particular generational demographic is too narrow a focus. We need to be both diverse and inclusive at the same time, to plan services and facilities that are adaptable to changing technology and work processes, and which can accommodate a range of learning behaviours.

The focus of this paper is to review some of our collaborations of the relatively recent past which meet diverse client needs, within a constantly restrained resource base.

## **1. Auchmuty Information Common**

The incorporation of blended learning into teaching practices is changing the education landscape. Blended learning utilises a combination of online learning and teaching technologies which are progressively complementing face to face lectures in the traditional way.

In 2003 the opening of the Information Common brought together electronic learning resources, computer hardware and software, and media production facilities, in informal, collaborative layouts, to suit contemporary learning styles. The concept was intended to encourage collaboration amongst students, enable blended learning styles, and ease interactivity between students and resources.

We wanted to enrich the learning, research and overall university experience for all of our students, and to reinvigorate the traditional library environment. A café and vending machines, and round-the-clock opening hours mean the Information Common is able to support a diversity of preferred study patterns, and family and lifestyle demands.

There was an urgent need to meet growing student demand for increased access to electronic scholarly information resources and computing and IT facilities, services and equipment<sup>1</sup>. Since its opening the Information Common has significantly improved access to electronic resources and other online University services which support teaching, learning and research, This is demonstrated by an increase in accesses to online resources. Over 100 new PCs and Macs were made available for student use.

Our community has been enthusiastic in the use of the Common, in particular the 24 hour, 7 days a week opening. A particular component of the success is that it is always staffed. During Library hours of 8.00am to 10.00pm the Common is staffed with Library reference staff and frontline IT support staff (known as Rovers), with referral to consultancy for more complex or lengthy information needs. From 10.00pm to 8.00am, a Rover is rostered on, so help is always available. Through maintaining staff over the whole 24 hours of the day, we are also able to respond to remote and offshore students in real time via phone and email. Much of the support needed is for Endnote and Blackboard, particularly valuable for off-shore students who don't need to consider international time zones.

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<sup>1</sup> Results from the 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006 Library Customer Satisfaction Surveys and 2001, 2002 Composite Student Questionnaire Surveys identified a consistent and marked increase in student demand for access to electronic learning resources and computing facilities

In 2006 a further enhancement was a sponsorship deal, through which Dell provided 86 new computers for the Common. After the launch to celebrate this deal, Dell increased their commitment, delivering two HP colour laser printers for the Common. This partnership has been a particularly significant one for us, as it is our first with a commercial or corporate body. To this point our partnerships tended to be like with like – other libraries and educational bodies.

The success of the Common has influenced other facilities and services throughout the University. These have included

- The development of Student Services Hubs, where the Common feel has been adopted to provide a one-stop-shop for students in accessing administrative and academic program needs. A combined Information Common and Student Hub opened at the City Precinct at the start of 2007, providing further organisational collaboration.
- The adoption of the three-tier service model used in the Common into other University facilities, notably in IT and the Student Services Hubs.

In April 2007, the project team for the Auchmuty Information Common was awarded the Vice-Chancellor's Citation for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning.

## 2. Information Literacy

Where once libraries were "after the fact" in universities – mass lectures were backed up by library visits – now they are central to the teaching and learning experience. Information literacy is more complex ; literacy and academic writing technologies such as Endnote and Turnitin required by students are taught within universities – they are skills not usually learnt at school or in other forums. Libraries have largely picked up the responsibility for training in these areas.

Library staff worked with staff from Teaching and Learning in developing two programs to support student learning and information literacy at their own pace and in their own time. Again, sustainability was the driver. With 22,000 students, face-to-face teaching could not reach everyone, and the resources were not available to continue in this way.

**Infoskills** is a self-paced online tutorial for information literacy, including how to plan for research, seeking and evaluating information, recognising and avoiding plagiarism, academic writing skills, referencing and academic integrity. This tutorial won the Vice-Chancellor's Citation for Excellence, and was nominated for a Carrick Institute Award for Excellence in Teaching. A number of other bodies have requested permission to adapt the modules for their own use, including Weber University in the United States, and the QUIT campaign, for an awareness program for teenagers in NSW on the dangers of smoking.  
<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/library/tutorials/infoskills/index.html>

The **Endnote Tutorial** provides an interactive introduction to using Endnote for importing citations into research papers.  
<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/library/tutorials/endnote/index.html>

Both these tutorials have been added to the PRIMO database (Peer-Reviewed Instructional Materials Online), a best practice initiative of the American Libraries Association and the Association of College and Research Libraries.

## 3. BONUS – a resource sharing initiative

The availability of electronic full text serials and datasets has ensured that all students and staff have access to an unprecedented number of serial titles from their university library or desk top on a 24 x 7 basis. However, access to monograph collections tends to be restricted to in-house or local collections, participation in reciprocal borrowing schemes or mediated inter library lending. Access to reciprocal borrowing schemes, such as University Libraries

Australia, mostly benefits those in metropolitan areas who are able to personally visit a host library. Inter library loan requests for monographs are usually restricted to students enrolled in honours or higher degree programs are not generally available to undergraduate students.

In 2003, Innovative Interfaces Inc (III) approached the Universities of Sydney, University of Technology, Sydney,, Wollongong, Newcastle and the Australian National University with a proposal to conduct a pilot study for a self-service book requesting system, using their INN-Reach software. The proposal was considered by the University Librarians of New South Wales (UNISON) group who agreed to investigate options to extend the trial to include non-III sites. In May 2004 UNISON agreed to sponsor a two year research project to investigate user initiated interlibrary borrowing. The University of Newcastle, the University of Technology, Sydney, Charles Sturt University, in association with UNILINC Ltd, and the University of New South Wales signed up for a two year pilot. Charles Sturt University and University of New South Wales are non-Innovative sites as they use the Ex-Libris Aleph Library Management System.

A naming competition was conducted among all participating libraries in the project and the successful name chosen was BONUS (Books Of Nsw University libraries).

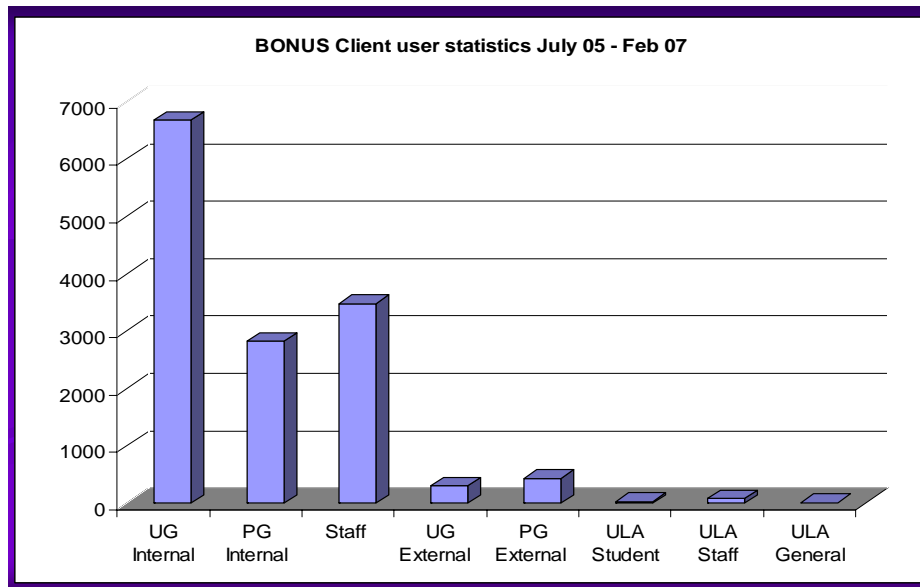
Every library profiled the materials from their collections to be made available for loan through BONUS. This was primarily low use items from their general collections, excluding reserve and short loan, rare books and other special collections.

BONUS was launched on July 20, 2005 with the University of Newcastle, the University of Technology, Sydney, and Charles Sturt University participating. The University of New South Wales participated for the 2006 academic year, from March – December 2006. At the end of 2006, records for 992,025 titles had been loaded into the union database.. Of these, 75% of the titles were unique to only one location which indicated a relatively low level of duplication across the combined collections of the four participants.

The BONUS service is available free of charge to all students and staff, including undergraduates and University Libraries Australia (ULA) borrowers registered at any of the participating libraries.

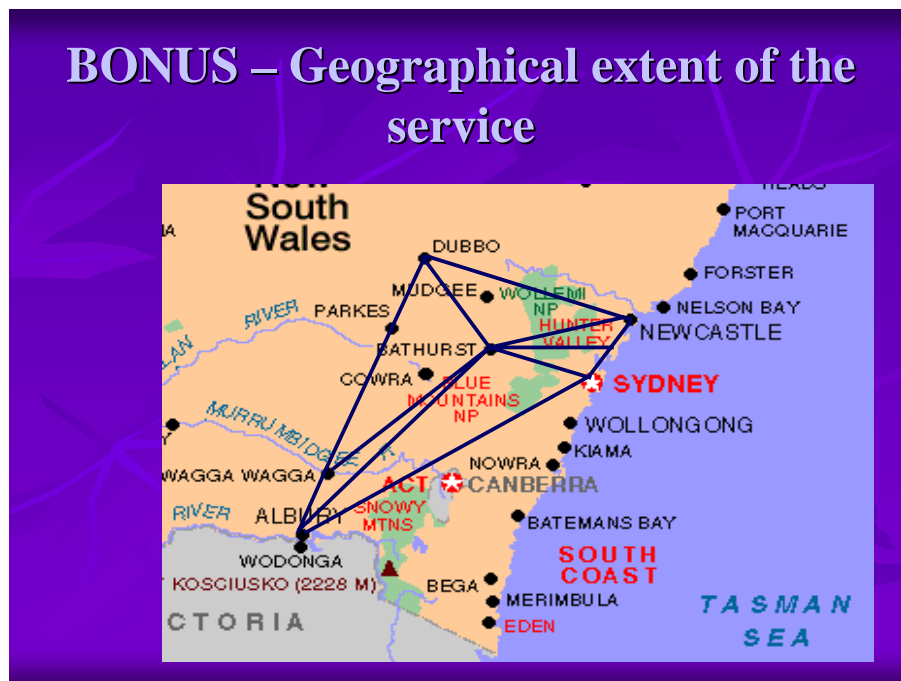
Clients can search their local catalogue and roll their search request over to the BONUS union catalogue automatically by clicking on the BONUS icon. Alternatively, they can search the BONUS union catalogue directly. The BONUS system automatically selects the available copy of the desired title and once an item is located, clients can nominate a pickup location. The item is then retrieved and sent to the nominated library for collection. Load balancing software is in place to ensure that the load is evenly balanced between net lenders and net borrowers.

Between July 2005 and March 2007, 14,834 requests have been placed. Of these, 12,258 or 82% have been fulfilled. The following table provides a breakdown of requests by patron category.



Undergraduates placed the highest number of requests at 49%, followed by staff recording 24.5% of total requests. Internal post graduate students represented 20% of the total requests while ULA reciprocal borrowers represented less than one percent. Many students who were enrolled in external programs, used BONUS as an alternative to their external library service with many citing that the BONUS system delivered an item within a shorter timeframe compared with the library's external book delivery system. Another noted benefit was the ability to retrieve and return items without charge.

Although the participant libraries were spread across a large part of New South Wales from Albury in the south, Dubbo in the west and Newcastle to the north, delivery services via Australia Post were highly satisfactory with the majority of items received within 2 to 4 days.



An analysis of 939 outgoing requests from the University of Newcastle library between April and May 2006 indicated that 35% of the requests were for titles already held. Although requests for locally held items are usually blocked via BONUS, the request to a partner site will be accepted if the local item is out on loan, has a missing status, or has a restricted loan

category, for example Course Reserve or 3 Day Loan. A total of 266 titles (28%) were on loan when the request was accepted by BONUS indicating that the holdings of the partner libraries were providing an alternative copy of a book during periods of high demand. By providing unmediated access to a distributed collection across several university library collections, BONUS provides an alternative to large scale duplication of collections.

The BONUS pilot has had an effect on inter library loan traffic at the University of Newcastle. Between 2004 and 2005, outgoing and incoming request for books had increased by 10.7% and 3.7% respectively. Analysis of 2006 outgoing inter library requests for books indicated a 9% reduction of requests over 2005. Incoming requests also registered a 8.5% reduction compared with 2005.

Client feedback has been enthusiastic due to the simple requesting interface and the ability to retrieve items within a two day timeframe without cost.

#### **4. New funding model**

This initiative is not strictly collaborative, but in its outcome it encouraged a more collegial outlook among faculty when purchasing scholarly information resources.

In 2002 the University of Newcastle Library adopted a new funding model for the allocation of funds for the purchase of information resources.

Previously, funds had been allocated to Faculties and Departments according to a formula based on WEFTSU (weighted equivalent fulltime student unit) and research quantum. This often resulted in faculties which had heavy commitments to journals (usually the sciences and research intensive disciplines) starting the year with no funds to purchase monographs – they had all been pre-committed to serials. Conversely, some Schools had difficulty spending their allocation and there was evidence of “spend for spend” sake.

This was also a period in which poor Australian dollar exchange rates over several years, and no increases to library funds placed further challenges on budget management. Our commitment to (expensive) online datasets and resources was also outstripping the ability of the funding model to provide. Undergraduate collections were suffering as a result.

By 2001, we started to view the role of the funding model as a professional requirement to fulfil the information needs of our clientele, rather than as a method of allocating funds. This was an opportunity to philosophically re-cast budget management in terms of the librarian's professional role, rather than through an accountancy-based model. We also took the opportunity to implement a policy strategy of providing 24 x 7 access to as many resources as possible, through the purchase of electronic format wherever feasible, with no print duplication.

Basically, the new model is practically a no-model. No allocation of funds is made to Faculties – orders are placed as required, and expenditure recorded. All subscriptions and datasets are funded off-the-top, as whole-of-university resources, rather than being recorded as expenditure against any single Faculty. This recognises the multidisciplinary nature of datasets, in particular, and supports a more collegial and collaborative culture across the University. Several other Australian universities have since adopted this or similar models.

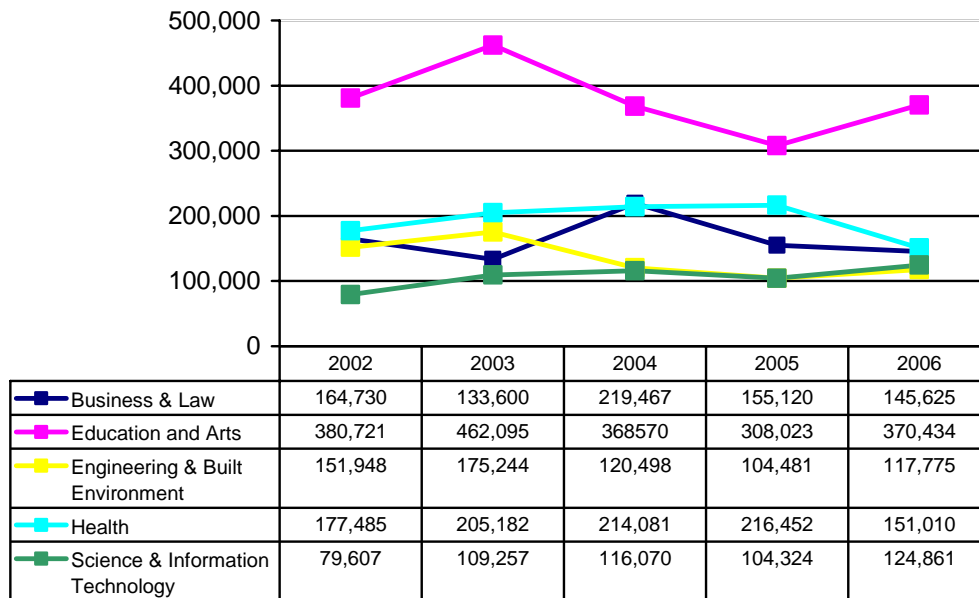
In the five years since the new model was implemented we have been able to evaluate its “workability” and acceptance.

In the first year, 2002, there was some fine-tuning, with one Faculty recording a 23% decrease in expenditure on the previous year's expenditure, although overall expenditure increased by 53% on 2001. We monitored this carefully, although we were still well within our budget confines. In the second year, there was a further strong increase in expenditure

on selections by Faculty. However in the third year, expenditure started to drop relatively, although it was still higher than in the first year. In the past two years, we have stabilised, with the exception of Education and Arts. As was predicted their need for monographs was greater than for the other Faculties, whose need for research journal literature was significant.

The one performance indicator which we feel has any meaning for this model is that “we meet all requests for purchase”. Since the model was introduced we have not rejected any requests due to lack of funds. We see the model as providing “information equity”, rather than “dollar equity” – that is, if all information needs or requests for purchase are met, the fact that more money is spent on resources for one Faculty than another is irrelevant. As long as we maintain CPI increases, this appears to be a sustainable as well as an equitable model.

**Expenditure on Monographs by Faculty, 2002 - 2006**



### Incidental impact

As a result of some deliberately collaborative projects, we had incidental fallout – knowledge transfer and skills-sharing which, while not entirely unanticipated, became as beneficial as the original project. The knowledge and skills transfer which have continued to occur through the simple expedient of co-location of IT and Library staff has been phenomenal, with the real winners being our clientele.

Staff who have been involved in these and other collaborations have been enthusiastic about their experiences, and the enthusiasm is rubbing off on others. We are seeing a move amongst staff to be more broadly involved with work and projects outside their traditional

organisational teams. For example, technical services staff now work at the information desk on regular rostered shifts. Staff in the Electronic Resources Team regularly catalogue archival material into the library catalogue. Others are involved in digitising historic photographs of the local and regional area into the catalogue. The archive and photograph projects are of broader community interest, and also enhance our catalogue.

Overall, our move to greater reliance on collaborative work has enabled us not merely to sustain services, but to continually improve and enhance. Our prime objective is to realise our vision for the Library as

*a quality learning environment where people are inspired to  
explore, research, create, reflect and grow.*