A new (multiplayer) model of academic library support for research

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Challenge - the Players

Academics
• Punishing workloads & pressure to increase publication output – tied to funding

Library
• Traditional role in research support (law qual?)
  • Librarians wearing many hats
  • How can we support the research process & raise our profile / relevance?

Students/RAs
• Traditionally menial roles in the library
• Problematic use as researchers by academics

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Solution – setting up the game

The LRS was set up in 2009

• Central funding for a 3 year trial

• Brief – supporting academics by giving them more time to think and write, thereby contributing to the quality, quantity and impact of faculty publications, through provision of a total service, from simple document delivery and support for grant applications through citation analysis right through to in-depth research and analysis of findings.

• Based on the US model – first of its kind here

Solution – collaboration

Model

Collaboration of skill sets: substantive legal knowledge + expertise in finding relevant information = excellence in output

2 experienced law librarians (not already employed in the library) & 6 RAs (later year JD or LLB students) with a variety of previous qualifications and other attributes (eg: languages) - working in close proximity throughout research projects

• @50 RA hours a week / @8 hours each
The Play

Projects scoped and supervised by the librarians
• Where to look & how to look
• Example: domestic violence & its impact on the economic security of women

• Projects fleshed out by RAs – adding value through analysis
  • eg: is a contention supported by the cases?

• Average 2 week turnaround for projects
  • Average of 11 hours spent on each project

• Projects presented as professional and detailed memos

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Winners – the academics

90 academics in the Law Faculty

• Over 80% had used the service within the first year, and continue to do so
• 450 requests in 2010
• Extremely positive feedback
• Effect on ERA ranking? Law School currently on top ranking

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Winners – the Librarians / LRS

Job satisfaction!
• Time for investigation
• No other demands on our time

Advantages to the other librarians and the Library as a whole

2010 VC’s award for excellence in teamwork.

Winners – the Student RAs

• Job satisfaction
  • Well paid!
  • In the building where they study
  • Assists in their own research
  • ‘Ownership’ of projects – their name on it
  • Chance to meet and work with academics

• Enhanced career opportunities & value added to their future professional roles
  • eg: research skills / presenting results professionally

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Cost

$250,000 PA

• $70,000 for RA salaries

Questions?

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The Law Research Service

Law Research Service workload by hours 2010

- Research: 66%
- Document delivery: 23%
- Research support: 11%

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