

CCA-EDUCAUSE Australasia Presentation Abstract

A new role for QUT Library

Natalie Ryan¹

¹Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia, ne.ryan@qut.edu.au

INTRODUCTION

Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Library has been exploring the ways that an academic library can provide corporate information management support as a service University-wide. University libraries traditionally define information management as provision of information resources for research and teaching and learning, rather than taking a hands-on role in corporate information management.

Options for effective online collaboration have been of increased interest for staff across the University. QUT Library has been working closely with the Information Technology Services department to provide information management expertise during implementation of new collaborative spaces and tools, and to advise on the provision of support to end users.

Heavy reliance on unstructured tools for information sharing and storage; such as email and ad hoc shared folders led to resourcing issues within the University. Ever increasing amounts of storage were required but anecdotal evidence suggested that due to siloing of information many resources were being expended on duplicate data and files.

In recent years QUT Library has embarked on a number of initiatives to improve and support information management across the University.

ADVISORY ROLE

The Director, Library Services was invited to chair QUT's newly-formed Information Management Advisory Group (IMAG) in 2007. This group has a University-wide membership and reports to QUT's Information Technology Governance Committee. IMAG's role is to consider and advise on the information management impact and aspects of new projects, services and service improvement initiatives.

This group and its leadership by the Library ensures that information management is a core consideration rather than an after-thought in the development, implementation and continuous improvement of IT services. To date the group has advised on issues such as;

- redevelopment of QUT's web presence and web governance framework,
- changes to email provisioning and policies,
- data archiving policies,
- management of data quality,
- development social media policy for the University, and
- the implementation of new communication tools and systems.

SHAREPOINT AND IMPROVING COLLABORATION

The Library led a QUT-wide project to embed SharePoint as a corporate service, and continues to be involved in providing support for end-users across the University. A co-operative service management approach to SharePoint adopted by the Library and IT Services department, has allowed staff to draw on a combination of technical and information management skills in configuring the system and supporting users.

Involvement with other Australian universities progressing similar SharePoint projects suggests that QUT is unusual in co-opting a Library staff member's information management expertise during the implementation of such a service. This collaborative approach has also been used in developing best practice solutions for managing email, information spaces, collaborative technologies and data storage.

COMMUNICATIONS AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Library-led communications and events are encouraging increased early stage communication about projects and initiatives. The "Info Solutions Forum" is an IMAG-sponsored event, open to all QUT staff, where brief, structured snapshots are presented about information management-related projects, service changes or improvements, during planning and implementation phases. Presentations are based on a template that focusses on the issue or problem that the initiative is intending to solve, the proposed solutions, progress so far and contact options to obtain more information.

This event has proved popular, the quarterly forums attract around 70-100 staff from areas across the University. Presentations are recorded and can be downloaded by staff unable to attend or referred to later by attendees. The Info Solutions Forum serves to raise awareness about new initiatives on the horizon, create connections between interested parties and open dialogue about the fact that different areas of the University face many similar issues.

The Library has also become involved in communicating records management responsibilities to staff QUT-wide. Library staff have worked in close collaboration with the Records Management Services department to ensure that staff who are seeking guidance on issues of information management issues are also aware of the processes and tools in place to support the management of University business records.

TRAINING AND GUIDANCE

Through discussions with staff across the University a need was identified for both hands-on support and self-help resources to assist QUT staff in improving information management practices. Management of information spaces and tools was often left to administrative staff who felt that they did not know where to start maintaining and structuring the quantities of files, emails and data they were tasked with managing.

Resources produced by the Library advising on the information management aspects of email management, document naming and structuring shared-network drives have been very popular University-wide. Virtual “show-bags” include guides, presentations and plans for information management initiatives, these allow staff to manage improvement of processes within their own areas, and at the same time serve to align practices, rather than each area developing potentially conflicting processes.

INFORMATION SPACES – TASK TO TECHNOLOGY FIT

During the course of the Library’s information management initiatives it emerged that many areas across the University were struggling with the number of different information tools and spaces available. Confusion over the best fit of different tools to different tasks was resulting in a great deal of duplication and a maintenance burden for staff.

A simple interactive tool has been developed by the Library and made available online for all staff. The “Info Solutions Selector” provides users with a recommended information space for their information management needs based on their responses to a brief series of questions. The tool also provides information on the best use of various information sharing, communication and collaboration tools and links to support and self-help resources for using each tool.

CONCLUSION

The QUT Library has responded to a need for guidance on corporate information management within the University. Response to the service and resources provided by the Library has out-stripped initial expectations, and demand for information management support has been high across the University.

Through close collaboration with other areas, such as IT Services and Records Management Services, the Library has managed to bring about a situation where information management is a primary consideration when implementing new systems, rather than an after-thought. Self-help resources and increased communication about information management initiatives have served to improve alignment of practices across QUT.

Through the processes discussed in this paper, QUT Library has successfully positioned itself as not only a source of resources for research and teaching and learning, but also as an advisory service for corporate information management.

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