

How we are taking the UTS library into the future

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The game has changed. It is no longer just about text or about us (as librarians) and how we see the world being organised or classified. To some extent we need to catch up with students and assist them, the same applies to researchers and academics though in other ways. We can only do this if we understand them, know what they want and know how they'd like us to help. We also need to understand the new landscape and environment ourselves and my guess is that most in the library and educational world do not.

In this presentation I'd like to discuss the elements I see as necessary in a more inclusive, participatory approach to planning our future library. I hope to illustrate an approach that isn't just about the technologies we will use, but also the way we select them and how we will deploy them. I will cover the following points as I illustrate that approach:

- We need to **learn (again) how to be active, creative, innovative and inclusive contributors** in order to fully understand and utilise fully some of the new technologies we are deploying. Most cannot fully be understood by observation alone nor by reading about them in books. We also need to re-learn how to see possibilities, not problems and to be brave enough to have a go. Any form of innovation has almost been sidelined by an obsession with risk management that has become risk avoidance at all costs.
- We need to learn how to **take responsibility for our own future** and do things for ourselves, not wait for a consultant to design a matrix to contract out the risk, experience, learning, responsibility and activity. Nor should we simply wait for our masters or government to invest in our future. Yes, there are hard decisions to make, but if we were really pressed by an emergency or disaster such decisions about what really matters and what doesn't would be made efficiently and quickly, so why not try to do it without that imperative? Do we really need adversity to inspire action?
- We must also understand the power and benefits of **randomness and chaos**. Freedom from yesterday's policy barriers, useless governance structures, risk aversion, committee bureaucracy; and freedom to explore new ways and new methods is vital. Creative innovation is almost completely ruled out and its sharp edges are dulled by a comprehensive and bureaucratic set of rules, procedures, guidelines and policies covering everything we might do. We should not rule out the unknown so completely because we fear it. Sometimes the unknown contains the answers.
- **Liaison** needs to be extended both within our own communities and networks and also outside our communities because there is a great deal we can build on. There are valuable partnerships to be made from that liaison and external collaboration. Not all the answers and inspiration will come from within or the familiar.
- Can we **crowd-source and co-design** better ideas, services and solutions to some of our challenges and even provide much-needed infrastructure more effectively using social media technology? Has anyone really tried? We must understand the power and influence of communities and living networks and how connections are best made and facilitated within these.
- Do we listen to what our users are saying and how can we do that better these days? Can we set up **convenient, intuitive and more engaging ways for users to communicate with us** (e.g. encouraging conversations instead of complaints through the use of Wallwisher feedback software). When our users or students express interest in academic services like libraries, do we listen and respond accordingly, i.e. seriously consider taking up their ideas and making them real (examples here include our work with Designing Out Crime students, taking up student ideas for the Augmented Campus, regular displays of student art and design work in the Library, and our Digi-stories competition).

We are not modelling our future library on someone else's blue-print. Some major technologies that we will incorporate in it (i.e. ASRS & RFID) will allow us to deliver different services and to provide new spaces within the library itself. They will also require us to incorporate enhanced search and discovery tools online and students are already indicating what else they'd like to see in that respect on portable platforms. Our solution is evolving "organically" from within and from our research, the UTS community and our networks. It has grown and changed as a result of some "experimentation" and play, even over the last 12 months. It is also being combined with encouragement from senior managers to explore the use of new web and mobile technologies and shared attitudinal change from within including a

more inclusive, trusting, motivated and less hierarchical approach to strategic planning. In that respect I will discuss how are we giving library staff at UTS more autonomy, mastery and purpose.

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