

Design for the New Millennium: Transforming Learning and Service Spaces

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INTRODUCTION

In November 2006, the Library and Information Technology Services at Bond University were amalgamated to form a new Information Services organisation. In the following year the University embarked on an ambitious and innovative building program that would transform the University's Library and Art Gallery to create state-of-the-art learning environments. The program would also have a role in fundamentally changing the way in which Information Services delivers its services.

This presentation will describe the evolution of this far sighted building and refurbishment program. More importantly it will assess the extent to which the design of the new Library and Multimedia Learning Centre and the design of the service delivery spaces have achieved the diverse and ambitious goals envisioned by the University community.

While the high-tech, social learning spaces are an extremely successful feature of the new design, the new styles of service delivery has proved equally successful. The need to provide an adequate mix of space, including traditional silent study space, to meet different learning styles has proved very challenging in the new library design.

BACKGROUND OF THE REFURBISHMENT PROGRAM

The building program to transform the University's Library and Art Gallery was conducted in phases over a three year period from November 2007 to May 2010. While the scope of the program evolved over time, a central aim was to create a range of flexible, technology-rich learning spaces. This began with refurbishing the former Art Gallery to create the Balnaves Foundation Multimedia Learning Centre which is now an architecturally exciting, high-tech social learning space. The Multimedia Learning Centre was completed in 2008.

The next three phases of the program from mid-2008 to May 2010 were to transform the John and Alison Kearny Library by extending and optimising the space available and by incorporating new features such as a cafe and an integrated service desk delivering library and IT support. Provision of a variety of state-of-the-art individual and group learning spaces was also central to the program. There were a number of more specific goals including a requirement for the design to facilitate new styles of service delivery, such as self-service, tiered levels of service and roving services based around concierge style service points.

The organisational change that established Information Services had a major impact on the final Main Library refurbishment and extension plan. The design brief was originally initiated in 2005 before the formation of Information Services and the plan was later expanded to incorporate staff offices that could accommodate all of the former Library and IT staff. The organisational change also made possible a new level of service integration, which was the combination of library and computing support into a single service point.

THE BOND UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT

While much has been written about the characteristics and learning styles of the net generation and their effect on libraries and learning spaces, the reality of what staff and students expect of the modern university learning environment is diverse and ever changing across the semester and over time. Student and staff preferences in accessing and using information resources and services and the impact of the pervasive information technology of the Digital Age further complicate learning space requirements. [1,2,3]

At Bond, the response to the new learning and service environments has been resoundingly positive; however our experience has also reinforced the need to cater for a wide diversity of learning styles. It has also demonstrated the importance of integrating services.

The presentation will draw on data gathered through student surveys and focus groups to evaluate student satisfaction and it will describe how the new high-tech learning spaces are being used. It will also describe how the new service model

was developed for the one-stop-shop service point providing library and IT support services and other new forms of service delivery that have been made possible in the new design.

BALNAVES FOUNDATION MULTIMEDIA LEARNING CENTRE

Opened in 2008, the MLC includes study booths with large LCD screens and document cameras, etc. to facilitate collaborative learning, varying sized pods with desktop computers for individuals or small groups, banquet style seating to cater for social learning as well as very large screens for projection of digital high art produced by multimedia students. Gaming technology (PS3, Wii and Xbox) is also available to support students in the Computer Gaming program.

Feedback from students has indicated a high degree of satisfaction with all features of the space and the ongoing high levels of usage confirm that level of approval. Important issues that were a great concern in refurbishing the Art Gallery to create the MLC included light and noise control and the careful consideration given to these aspects in the design phase have proved successful.

THE JOHN AND ALISON KEARNEY MAIN LIBRARY

Completed in May 2010, the refurbishment and extension of the John and Alison Kearney Library has included the complete renovation of the 3 floors of the original Library as well as the construction of a 3 story extension. All office space was moved out of the original Library building into the extension thus increasing the public floor space available. Many of the design features included in the Multimedia Learning Centre were carried over to the Main Library design.

The ground floor of the Main Library incorporates the cafe, the Library and Computing Service Desk as well as a range of individual and group learning spaces including varying sized pods with desktop computers. This floor is overwhelmingly an 'active' learning space. The two mezzanine floors and the two upper Library floors provide progressively quieter learning space.

The recent Library customer survey has highlighted the positive response to the new active learning zones as well as a level of dissatisfaction with the provision for quiet study especially as the semester progresses.

The presentation will also cover the establishment of the Library and Computing Service Desk as an integrated service providing a core set of library and computing support services as well as specialised lending, computing and information assistance services through a tiered service structure. Development of roving services will also be described.

The new styles of service delivery made possible in the Main Library have been particularly successful as evidenced in customer survey feedback.

REFERENCES

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