THETA

The Higher Education Technology Agenda

A Real-time Step into Space

The genesis of the idea can from the most unlikely of places. The Swinburne Study Spaces app came from applying the concept of a parking guidance system to a completely new context – student study space. A simple, elegant, yet effective solution and a first.

Swinburne's former Chief Information Officer (CIO), Derek Whitehead, was looking for a car park at a large and busy shopping mall in Melbourne's eastern suburbs. The centre recently installed a parking guidance system that alerted shoppers to vacant car spaces, using a traffic-light like system and overhead LED signage. As he drove around using the guidance system to find a park, it occurred to him that we could use similar technology to alert students to vacant study space on campus. After the closure of two campuses and shifting additional courses to our main campus, it quickly became apparent that finding available study space was an issue for students. They started to complain more frequently. The Library as the biggest provider of study and open access computing space across the University bore the brunt of the complaints. It was agreed that giving students real-time information about available study space would help alleviate the issue. Whitehead's idea became the basis of a business case and money was found to enable us to develop a technology solution.

Initially we worked with a company that pioneered parking guidance systems in Australia's major shopping centres. We were already using their cameras and software throughout the University for security and to count the number of people coming in and out of campus libraries. Fortunately the vendor thought a study space guidance system was good idea too and they made all the data available free of charge. We used that data to develop a Study Spaces app that is now available across multiple platforms.

The successful project is the result of collaboration between three areas of the University: the Library, Information Technology Services (ITS) and Facilities. We currently have cameras and software in 10 separate study spaces across the main campus, providing a total of 1064 study spaces. This session will describe the project from idea to implementation. It will cover details about our space issues, the project partners, project management methodology, technologies used to develop the applications, a demonstration of the app and a roadmap for future development. It is a wonderful example of what can be achieved when different areas

of a university come together to innovate which is the spirit of THETA.

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ONE THOUGHT ON "A REAL-TIME STEP INTO SPACE"

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