HONEY, WE’VE SHRUNK THE REFERENCING GUIDE!
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The development of intelligent mobile devices such as iPhones has raised the prospect of students accessing learning tasks and materials with a flexibility which would have seemed magical a few short years ago. Library planning meetings have begun to ponder the question of how best to engage with these new technologies. Considerable work has been done already in TAFE libraries to package information into attractive, data-rich web-ready formats such as LibGuides or via custom-built templates which can be readily accessed in a variety of ways, including over a mobile phone.

An immediate reaction to the prospect of the advent of mobile learning via the tiny iPhone screen is “Does this mean that we now have to shrink the message to fit the medium?” The answer seems to be “No” – instead we have to understand how our clients actually use their mobile devices and what content they expect to find on them.

For Gen Y students, the mobile device is often used like a street directory – it is seen as a pointer to sources of information. It is consulted on the go: in the train or bus, while having a cup of coffee, or while talking over work assignments with friends. What the Gen Y user wants to find is sources of information, rather than the information itself. Having located the source in a spare minute, the actual research will be done at a later time.

For cut through with this searcher, the Library needs to package the availability of information which might meet specific needs, rather than the information itself. Links to LibGuides, clouds of search terms which indicate that the library has good holdings in particular subjects, the availability of a virtual librarian service, or augmented reality overlays which pinpoint exactly where specific collections can be found in their library are what will provide instant gratification for the searcher; having located a good information source, the data will be harvested at a later time.

By regarding the mobile device as an opportunity for their clients to pull in information quickly and effortlessly as well as a means to push information out to them, the TAFE library will be better placed to engage productively with this technological revolution.