

HONEY, WE'VE SHRUNK THE REFERENCING GUIDE!

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For Libraries, each successive wave of information technology requires radical rethinking of the way we work and interact with our clients if each promising advance is to be fully exploited and successfully integrated into our routine operations. Libraries are spoilt for choice as each technological advance seems to open up exciting and boundless possibilities. Latterly, the development of intelligent mobile devices such as iPhones and iPads have raised the prospect of providing access to learning tasks and materials with a flexibility which would have seemed magical a few short year ago. Library planners everywhere are now pondering how best to engage with these new technologies. For the Library at Box Hill Institute (BHI), one of Melbourne's long-established and successful metropolitan VET institutes, the consideration of the impact of new mobile technologies has been closely bound in with our adaptation to particular external and internal circumstances which are fundamentally changing our operations.

Back in 2006, BHI Library commenced a journey of moving from a traditional mode of operation to a Learning Commons model. The drivers for this move include:

- BHI's successful foray since 2006 into Higher Education (we offer Degrees and Associate Degrees in Commerce, Biotechnology, IT, Building, and all aspects of the Music and Performance industries)
- Plans to take BHI beyond its long-established role as a VET provider towards a future as a Polytechnic University
- Changes in pedagogy, in response to pressures such as the shift of emphasis from on-site, face-to-face delivery to off-site delivery modes
- The introduction of contestability across all VET courses in Victoria, creating a powerful marketplace for educational programs in which public and private VET providers are competing with each other as well as the Higher Education providers
- Internal and external reviews of Library operations which highlighted issues such as: uneconomic branch operations (4 branches across 3 campuses - all within a 2km radius), a hierarchical, campus-centric culture, 1970s-style layouts and rule-bound operations, lack of facilities rated highly by users (such as choices of study and socializing spaces, extended access, up-to-date collections and IT equipment and related technology), a significant diminution in conventional statistical measures and a losing battle to engage with students (and teachers) by conventional methods such as orientation tours, Information Literacy programs and reference services.

The progress on this journey since 2006 has been steady, concentrating mainly on staffing, services and facilities. Since 2008, the Library has merged 2 service points, reducing from 4 to 3 and has restructured staffing (downsizing in the process through natural attrition) to produce a flatter, team-

based organization with a reduced emphasis on campus attachments. Simultaneously, a long-term reappraisal of policies and procedures got underway.

Minor refurbishments carried out over the past two years have seen the Library shed some of its 1970s image and experiment with layouts catering to a range of different learning styles (individual and group study, social interaction – including eating and drinking in the library(!) and new models of client interaction (more self-check units, smaller, better located service desks as centres encouraging more mobile, proactive staffing).

Last but not least, in 2010 the Library ended long years of being moved from one more or less unsatisfactory “home” to another within the Institute – including placement within Facilities, then Marketing. It is now located within the Division of Learning & Academic Affairs, whose portfolios include Learning & Academic Support, Higher Education & International Partnerships, Curriculum, Learning & Academic Services, Blended eLearning Solutions, Academic Planning & Research and Educational Quality.

Periods of change always result in mixed responses but monitoring those elicited by BHI Library’s journey show that they are mainly positive. Feelings of loss for former practices and locations and trepidation about future prospects are offset by enhanced recognition of the Library’s place in the Institute and its role in delivering positive educational outcomes, pride in new facilities, growing excitement about new opportunities and new ways of working together, and growing willingness to engage in further change. Most importantly, it is widely appreciated that the next leg of the journey will involve the Library rethinking its information products and services.

The Library has a number of well-developed core information products and services, including its web pages, its face-to-face Information Literacy programs and associated suite of back-up resources which are developed and shared across the Information Services team. But to date, the Library has made minimal forays into Web 2.0 technologies. AquaBrowser has been implemented as the front-end of the SirsiDynix catalogue while SpringShare’s LibGuides, offering ready-made templates has been selected as a platform for subject guides which can be readily accessed in a variety of ways, including via mobile devices. Over 50 LibGuides have been published since 2008, with no end in sight. They have proved a highly successful product, being well accepted by students and teachers as well as providing material assistance in the process of accreditation and re-accreditation of BHI courses. The stage is set for further development of library resources, but the prospect of selecting and incorporating new technologies is at once exhilarating and somewhat daunting. For example, an immediate reaction to the announcement that BHI will develop mobile learning interfaces for all learning materials it develops in future (for example via the tiny iPhone screen) was “Does this mean that we now have to shrink every information product we produce to fit the medium?” It has not helped that, when located within the Marketing Division, the Library was constantly being urged to acquire new technology for its own sake – shiny, alluring “toys for the boys” to show that we were in the forefront of modernity! Even without these diversions, the perennial question for any Library faced with an avalanche of new technological offerings is: what new developments are worth adopting, and how best will they work with the physical and operational changes both proposed and already in place?

Fortunately for the BHI Library (and thanks in no small measure to its recent move into Learning and Academic Affairs) it is now centrally located within the engine room of educational change at BHI. As part of the move to Assessment-lead learning, in which the student “owns” their own learning, the Library is playing a part in developing curricula for our Higher Education programs, aiming to embed Information Literacy in programs from the outset.

It is recognized that to be successful in a highly competitive environment, Institutes need to package everything our learners will need so that it can be “pulled” in quickly and effortlessly when and as required. Gone are the days when information was “pushed” out in neat time-tableable packages. For today’s prospective students – digital natives in the main – who are encouraged to pick and choose the educational training that best suits them, the day is no longer neatly packaged into 8 hour divisions and their choices of courses and colleges will be influenced in no small measure by their ability to access information at times and in places and using platforms that best suit their needs.

To assist Institute teachers blend pedagogy with the technologies of the future, Learning and Academic Affairs’ Blended e-Learning Solutions centre offers intensive internships that expose BHI staff to, and let them experiment with new software and hardware. The Library, which has already has a program of up-skilling staff with teaching qualifications, has put three Interns through the program. This is already paying dividends for the Library. BHI’s eleven-year old Learning Management System (DLSS) is obsolete and does not support Web 2.0 functionality nor provide collaborative facilities, so many courses are migrating to BHive, BHI’s version of Blackboard/TAFE VC. The Library is actively promoting our capacity to add LibGuides and database links to BHIVEcourse material, but success

depends on our timely knowledge of what work is being undertaken within Teaching Centres. A more fruitful approach has been a successful pilot project directly arising from an Internship program. This has seen the development of a comprehensive suite of online Information Literacy modules, undertaken with the support of our flagship Music programs and designed for access via BHive. But since BHIVE itself is a proprietary system and not hospitable to open-source software, it has drawbacks and will not remain the Institute's only LMS. The Library is working closely with Blended eLearning Solutions which is managing a major project to commission a future-proof LMS and to roll out a variety of associated sub-projects. Those of particular relevance to the Library journey include:

- SharePoint: this will be the vehicle chosen to showcase information about services to current students. It will act as a portal to other systems vital to students, such as results and timetables.

The Library is in the process of rebuilding its webpages, in conjunction with Blended eLearning Solutions and will migrate it as well as its Virtual Library (built by Blended eLearning Solutions to library specifications and forming part of a much larger BHI Virtual Campus project) to SharePoint. As the Virtual Library is populated, library users will be able to inhabit and work in a virtual environment, accessing the catalogue, viewing vodcasts on how copiers and printers work, add credit to ID cards or how to access the wireless network, talking to the Virtual Help Desk or downloading podcasts, for example on how to research assignment topics or compile a reference list. Looking to the future, the Virtual Library will be able to be used as a Virtual Classroom for Library Studies students who will be able to practice lending desk operations, shelf ordering or stocktaking. Links to the library catalogue could be provided via Bookmyne, (the SirsiDynix mobile catalogue app) or via LibraryThing's Library Anywhere product.

To jumpstart the help service currently offered to clients via email, the Library is actively assessing LibAnswers, a sister product of LibGuides from the Springshare stable (<http://demo.libanswers.com/>), offering FAQ facilities, Livechat and in-depth help in an attractive and customizable format .

- Learning resources portal: a project to improve access to BHI's learning resources, especially for those which facilitate mobile learning (typically courses where students have a large on-site component and may come into class only for theoretical modules)

The Library will work with relevant Teaching Centres as an integral part of their course rewriting process and is currently assessing and assembling an armory of mobile-friendly products and services. These include LibAnswers, LibGuides (in mobile format), links to the Library catalogue, mobile versions of Library databases and a new series of "How to" guides in mobile-friendly format which are being developed as part of the Library's 2010 internship program. The "How to" guides will also be accessible through the Library web pages and in BHIVE course material.

Part of the Library's current Internship program involves experimentation with flip cameras, microphones plus a range of mobile devices in order to produce podcasts and vodcasts which can then be "placed" wherever required.

- Student Orientation project: an Institute-wide Orientation program aims to enhance student engagement in their studies, boost retention rates and provide students with tools they can use to obtain employment and throughout their subsequent careers. It will provide all BHI students with individual personalized training plans as an integral part of their induction to tertiary studies.

The Library will play a part in the design and rollout of the Orientation program. All of the material the Library has developed for other collaborative work will be highly relevant and we will be able to "position" our growing collection of information products and services quite strategically to meet participant needs at critical points of their progression through the program.

The Library is well aware that despite our best efforts, not all BHI students receive any formal introduction to the library within their first few weeks at the Institute. The percentage of students who subsequently gain exposure via face-to-face Information Literacy programs is quite small. Given the rigidities of VET national curricula, it is difficult to increase this percentage, while schemes aimed at embedding information literacy within higher education offerings are in their infancy for dual sector Institutes like BHI. The Orientation project thus offers the Library new opportunities, not only to "push" its information services to clients, but to engage with learners on their own terms, encouraging them to "pull" the information they require when they need it.

Our work with Blended eLearning Solutions is both challenging and exciting but it is not the only project set to change the way the Library selects and deploys new technology. Currently, the Library is

involved in planning for two major building projects (the Engineering Green Hub [2009-2010] and the Technology Centre [2010-2011]) and is working on ways of servicing the new Aveda Health and Wellness Centre (2009-2010).

Though none of these developments have included traditional library service points within their design, each will provide the Library with opportunities to experiment with new ways of connecting with students and staff. It is likely that the Library presence in these new facilities will be “meet the librarian at the coffee shop”, where students and staff will be able to work hands-on with “How to” guides, link into mobile databases or the catalogue or check out relevant LibGuides. We should thus be able to leverage our information and reach our clients in ways that traditional “sign up for Information Literacy” sessions and even the most proactive Liaison Librarian program can rarely achieve.

A major project for the Library in 2011 is a proposed Teaching & Learning Hub planned to sit within one of the our existing campus libraries. This Hub will be a combination of library, social centre with café and outdoor study areas and Higher Education Student lounge. It will offer extended hours of access, seminar centre, quiet- and group-study rooms plus an e-Sandpit where people can come and play with new technology and tap into exemplary teaching and learning materials. Student projects will also be on display. Thanks to our experience of working with the Engineering Hub, Aveda Centre and Technology Centre, our programs and materials will readily inform the work of the Teaching & Learning Hub.

BHI Library’s journey of change and growth since its decision in 2006 to move to a Learning Commons model has been challenging but rewarding. Even before the initial phase of implementing physical and organizational changes was complete, the issue of selecting, developing and incorporating new technologies arose. Although keen to take the next steps on our journey, we found ourselves overwhelmed with choice, slightly overawed by the power of new and emerging technologies and daunted by the challenge of meeting the expectations of our tech-savvy and digital native clientele. Were the changes that we might require incremental or, as some feared, revolutionary? Would we have to shrink the Referencing Guide and almost everything else as well? Fortunately, many of these concerns have been allayed. The Library’s move to the centre of pedagogical and developmental change within BHI has provided us with a comprehensive framework around which we can build and grow. The move to a new LMS, the development of new teaching and learning centres fix the focus for the development of our core products and services, indicate a logical pathway for their evolution and provide avenues for increased engagement with our clients.

In following this pathway, a staff development program can be readily mapped out, building on the work already undertaken by library staff through their teaching studies and Blended Learning internships. What we learn along the way will feed into the planning and operation of the Teaching & Learning Hub, which will be an important milestone towards the transformation of a traditional library service into a Learning Commons.

What we have learnt so far is that the watchwords underlying new developments in Institutes like BHI might well be: *Innovation*, not *Technology & Pedagogy*, not *Tools*. Technology, however alluring, is not an end in itself – it is a means to an end. In keeping the end point of our journey in the forefront of our planning, we have come to realized that it is not simply a matter of shrinking referencing guides, but recognizing the times and places where such a process is entirely necessary, assessing the alternatives and having the skills to deliver and capitalize on the results.
