



‘But You’re Restricting Access To Information’ – The Ethical And Cultural Dimensions Of Installing Access Gates In The Uts City Campus Library (Blake Library)

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Abstract

In April 2003 UTS Library became the first university library in Australia to install access gates at the entrance to its largest campus library. Blake Library is the City campus library and is located on the edge of Chinatown in the Sydney CBD. This paper outlines the motivating factors behind this decision and discusses the ethical and cultural issues worked through by the Library management group, with staff, primary clients and the broader community. It also describes the access policies developed to protect the interests of personal researchers in the community and summarises the Library’s experience, noting the positive outcomes a year down the track.

Introduction

When did you first enter a university library? Was it as an enrolled university student? Most probably it was earlier than that, perhaps as a secondary school student or even earlier! The authors remember their respective experiences vividly. In one case it was in the final years at secondary school and the vision of highly polished linoleum floors, the worn but serviceable wooden carrels and the bays and bays of books is still strong. So is the memory of the hush of the library and the sound of footsteps on the lino, as well as the excitement felt at being in that place and with those books! Was her presence tolerated or welcomed? Probably the former! Our author tried to work as independently and inconspicuously as possible, avoiding making any demands on staff. She felt it was a privilege to be there rather than a right, however there was no doubt in her mind that she was ‘allowed’ to be there i.e. the university library was a resource that was available to members of the public – especially those who wanted to read and research.

Has anything changed today? Well, library environments have certainly changed dramatically. For example our attitudes to learning support and the sort of environment we now strive to provide for students have evolved. University libraries are hubs of action rather than ‘hushed’ throughout. Students work in groups and multi task in some areas, study quietly and individually in others. Some libraries work in partnership with other units in the university to provide a ‘one stop shop’ in support of student needs. Information technology has had an enormous impact not only on the library environment and universal access to information resources but also on how we manage the circulation of our collections and the security of our libraries.

The invention of the World Wide Web and tools such as Google has transformed access to information for students and researchers, as for the general public. With so much information ‘out there’ on the Internet is there still an expectation that

university libraries will be freely accessible as a public resource as has, for the most part, been the case in the past?

In this paper we discuss this question in its ethical and cultural context and describe the installation of access management gates in the largest of UTS Library’s three campus libraries, the Blake Library. We want to challenge a number of notions: firstly, that managing access to a university library through the installation of such gates must inevitably result in a restriction of access to information for the unaffiliated community member; secondly that ‘the community’ has inalienable rights of unfettered access to university libraries; and thirdly that the electronic management of access through swipe cards or similar technologies will of itself result in an unjustifiable level of surveillance.

It is outside the scope of this paper to engage in an in-depth discussion of ethical theory. Rather we discuss the issues that were a primary focus for us as Library managers faced with a situation which called for the exercise of professional ethical judgement. We argue that when faced with such ethical considerations we need to balance the security and safety of our clients and the rights of students to access the resources they have paid for through HECS and other fees with the needs of independent scholars and other members of the community, and that at UTS Library we have achieved that balance.

A Reluctant First In Australia

So, why did UTS Library become the first university library in Australia to activate access management gates on April 29, 2003?

UTS Library is comprised of three campus libraries: one at the Kuring-gai campus at Lindfield, a leafy northern suburb bordering Lane Cove National Park, one at the St. Leonard’s campus on Sydney’s lower North shore, and the third and largest, Blake Library at the City campus in Haymarket on the edge of Chinatown in the Sydney CBD.

Blake Library is one of very few university libraries in Australia with entrance doors opening directly onto a busy city street. For many years we have experienced a very high incidence of theft of personal property from our clients. 'Professional' thieves were known to be targeting the Library.

A number of measures have been introduced to manage security problems. The Security office for the UTS Haymarket precinct moved to a prominent office in the Blake Library when the Library was extended in 1995 in the hope that a high profile presence would act as a major deterrent to thieves. Later Security staff established an even more visible Security desk close to the entrance and exit of the Library. They also patrolled the Library alerting clients to high risk or negligent behaviour. A number of communication strategies such as posters (with the slogan 'Thieves go to Uni too'), PA announcements, installation of lockers, security cameras and a plain clothes police presence were tried. None of these measures brought about sustained improvement.

With more than 1.4 million people entering the Blake Library each year it was also becoming increasingly crowded. It appeared that many of the students using the Library were not from UTS or institutions with which we had reciprocal agreements e.g. Sydney Institute of TAFE and other universities. In repeated surveys UTS students complained of their inability to access the course materials they needed, materials which were listed in the catalogue as available for loan. Large numbers of books were being reported as missing and whilst some resurfaced from hiding places during shelf-reading, many others did not and were presumed stolen. A high number of emergency evacuations had been triggered manually over the years through the break glass mechanism on emergency exits. We wondered if books were being removed from the building through these exits at such times by unaffiliated users.

This situation called for improved management. Of overwhelming concern however was the theft of client personal property and it was in this context that we began considering ways in which we might prevent thieves gaining access to the Library. The possibility of installing access gates was raised.

In 2000, Sydney hosted the Olympic Games. The UTS Haymarket campus with its proximity to Darling Harbour became a base for the Australian Federal police during the period leading up to and including the Games. With the doors to the Blake Library opening directly onto the street where many thousands were expected to pass each day the Library was identified as 'at risk' or, possibly, a risk to the security of the Games. The police insisted that the University limit access during the period. The security presence was enhanced and guards vetted all those requiring access. Attention was paid to the manner in which they carried out their duties to ensure they maintained the interpersonal skills we demand of Library security staff. Not a single incident of theft was recorded during this period and students, for the first time, reported feeling 'safe'. Feedback received suggested that we should continue to control access for the security and safety of clients.

Our Security Services Unit strongly supported this suggestion and, after the Games, UTS Library was offered surplus security gates from a UTS building occupied by the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG). The Manager of Security Services also agreed to join a Library working group headed up by Beth Marnane, Lending Services Manager, to consider how access might be managed if gates were installed. The group submitted its report in Autumn semester 2001.

With the physical means of managing access available and with Security Services prepared to allocate the staffing required to support access management, the basic operational requirements had been addressed - in theory at least. A number of cultural and ethical issues needed to be worked through however.

Managing access to libraries

Managing access to, and egress from, libraries is not a new concept – even in Australia. We are all familiar with the Reader's Ticket; access to the Mitchell Library at the State Library of NSW is an example. We are also familiar with a uniformed security or attendant presence when we enter and leave the reading rooms of the large state libraries. For decades now we have passed through alarmed exit gates and tolerated surveillance cameras in parts of the Library. If we have travelled abroad we have provided a letter of introduction or similar to gain access to some university libraries. Georgia State University Library began the process of planning for its controlled access system back in 1999 and implemented it in April 2002. Others of us have visited other libraries with access gates such as the Bobst Library at New York University, Green Library at Stanford or the three university libraries in Glasgow: the University of Strathclyde, the University of Glasgow and the Glasgow Caledonian University. There are many other examples (Courtney 2003).

Cultural and ethical dimensions

Still, it was a first for Australia. What, if any, were our obligations to the community and how could we ensure that we met them? How restrictive did we need to be to achieve desired outcomes? What concerns might the UTS constituency and CAUL colleagues have that would need to be addressed, not to mention the broader community?

Already in 2000 some of our staff had expressed concern at any suggestion that we might 'restrict' access to the Library on an ongoing basis – it is fair to say that the notions of access held by almost all of us were challenged by the idea. Some academic staff reacted similarly and strongly. In making our decisions we needed to be aware of community expectations based on cultural norms and to consider the needs of our primary clients in a broader ethical context. This implied that any change in our policies would need to be justifiable and clearly communicated.

'Barbarians at the Gates' – Challenging the social norm.

In her 2001 article Nancy Courtney traces the history of 'unaffiliated user' access to academic libraries in the United States and the reasons why most universities have opened their doors, at least in terms of physical access, to the community. Her findings are based on a number of surveys she and others have conducted over several decades. Whilst her findings relate to American higher education institutions, which are a mix of private and public, they are also relevant in the Australian context.

The principal reasons given for allowing access by the community can be summarised as follows:

- Fostering good community relations
- Honouring public obligations of tax-supported institutions
- Providing service to the local community
- Honouring obligations of a legal deposit library
- Fulfilling reciprocal agreements with other institutions
- Offering a welcoming image to aid recruitment of new students
- Enabling access to unique collections
- Mitigating inadequacy of public libraries

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Most of these reasons reflect cultural perceptions of course. Except for reciprocal agreements, they have little or no basis in law but reflect a long standing commitment to permitting generally unrestricted physical access by members of the public to university libraries. However, even that culture of access has usually been constrained to those who might be presumed to be 'serious' users, sometimes with explicit proscriptions for school students and children permitted 'only under supervision'.

Underpinning these reasons there appears to be a generally accepted view that those with a 'serious', 'sincere', 'legitimate' or 'research' need must have access to resources available in academic libraries if they should only be available there. Along with state libraries, university libraries are often seen as significant state or national resources in a way that school and municipal libraries are not. This tradition perhaps arose when other libraries were scarce and poorly resourced in most parts of Australia, just as was the case in the United States.

Are all university libraries national resources?

Does the age, size and heritage nature of a university library's collections place a stronger obligation on that library to open its doors to the community? The larger university libraries, such as our neighbour at the University of Sydney which is also a legal deposit library, can be said to hold print collections which constitute part of the nation's unique cultural resource. This might not be true of all university libraries but it is certainly evident that university libraries in both urban and regional areas of Australia provide very important information resources for their cities and regions.

UTS became a university in 1988 and our library's printed collections reflect the transition from Institute and College of Advanced Education to research university. The strengths of our collections lie mainly in our extensive electronic resources which are not unique and in some cases unavailable to unaffiliated users due to licensing restrictions. On that basis, can one argue that UTS Library is under less of an obligation to admit unaffiliated users than other, older, legal deposit university libraries? It may well be the case that the community concern would be far greater should such a university library restrict access to its collections. Is it however simply a question of uniqueness? Or is it a matter of access to the library as a whole?

Ethical principles and normative judgements

Culturally then, there is an expectation that community members will have the opportunity to access university library collections should they have a need to access information held there. This expectation can also be justified on ethical grounds however.

UTS Library belongs to IFLA, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions and is committed to the principles expressed in its *Statement on Open Access to Scholarly Literature and Research Documentation*. In particular the following clauses are relevant to this discussion:

IFLA declares that the world-wide network of library and information services provides access to past, present and future scholarly literature and research documentation; ensures its preservation; assists users in discovery and use; ...

IFLA affirms that comprehensive open access to scholarly literature and research documentation is vital to the understanding of our world and to the identification of

solutions to global challenges and particularly the reduction of information inequality.

Open access guarantees the integrity of the system of scholarly communication by ensuring that all research and scholarship will be available in perpetuity for unrestricted examination and, where relevant, elaboration or refutation.

We believe that all academic libraries have an ethical obligation to make the scholarly information they hold accessible to those *requiring* access. Further we believe that libraries fulfil a vital function in a democratic society (Byrne 2004).

The UNESCO *Public Library Manifesto* (1994) states:

Freedom, prosperity and the development of society and individuals are fundamental human values. They will only be attained through the ability of well-informed citizens to exercise their democratic rights and to play an active role in society. Constructive participation and the development of democracy depend on satisfactory education as well as on free and unlimited access to knowledge, thought, culture and information. The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision making and cultural development of individual and social groups

In his article 'Libraries and democracy – management implications', Alex Byrne describes public libraries as having 'an instrumental role in the strengthening of civil society through building social capital' (2004, p.12). Byrne takes this further through reference to the *Glasgow Declaration* (IFLA 2002) which extends the principles across all libraries and information centres, positioning libraries 'as gateways to knowledge, thought and culture, [which] contribute to the development and maintenance of intellectual freedom and help to safeguard democratic values and universal civil rights'. He continues, 'We cannot have a commitment to supporting an informed community and to empowering individuals without asserting the need for unrestricted access to information' (Byrne 2004, p.13).

Is there a conflict here then? Is it possible on the one hand to be committed to social and ethical values relating to community access to academic libraries and at the same time consider the installation of gates to filter access?

Iacovino (2002, pp.57-58) defines ethics as

the study of the principles of human conduct or human actions. These actions must serve a purpose, which constitutes part of the whole of the moral agent's intention in doing what he or she does ... Thus ethics are not just how we 'feel' about something; it is a reasoned process.

Further she says

Ethical principles enable us to reach normative judgments. They guide our thinking by providing us with a basis for determining how we should act when an ethical issue arises. They do not provide definitive answers; only answers that can be justified by way of argument depending on the ethical viewpoints adopted, and the decision making models and processes employed (Iacovino 2002, p.61)

As stated by Byrne (2004, pp. 2 and 13)

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The professional must actively contemplate the effects of his or her actions both for the client and the community. Conflicting imperatives, particularly the expectation to serve the client versus the expectation to serve the community, must be resolved against an ethical framework in which the general good is a priority and disinterested practice is essential

....

As with all sets of principles, the challenge lies in putting them into operation. Managers must give effect to their commitment in the context of budgetary, staffing and resource limitations, legal and policy constraints and the daily exigencies of running service organisations. Policy development should be open and contestable and endeavour to be fair to all in its consequences. Management can entail hard and sometimes unpopular decisions but they should be based on an ethical foundation of honesty and fairness

The challenge for us was to install access gates at the Blake Library without excluding those with genuine personal research needs in the face of potential criticism from professional colleagues and others.

Are university libraries resourced to support unaffiliated access?
The ethics of charging community members for services also warrants discussion.

Recognition of the rights of community members to access the information they require in university libraries does not imply that all services designed to support the teaching, learning and research functions of the university should be available on the same basis as they are to that organisation's staff and students i.e. unfettered access. It also raises the question of legitimacy: who *requires* access? Without wishing to inquire into the personal interests of potential users, we have agreed that the use must be a use which extends beyond the services which the public libraries are designed to provide.

Courtney (2001, pp.473-474) reports on the reasons why some libraries, particularly more recently, have felt justified in restricting access to e.g. reference assistance, borrowing, computer access and even physical access. She traces the 'expansion and retraction' of unaffiliated access from the 1950's when 'post-war population shifts, emphasis on college-preparatory work at the high school level, and an increase in the college-educated population brought about greater numbers of unaffiliated users into the library', through the 1960's when academic libraries 'began to feel pressured' from increased demand caused by a range of factors including greater uptake of higher education, the creation of 'new colleges' and suburbs with poor library facilities, the information explosion, changes in tertiary and secondary curriculum design which demanded broader reading and weekend and evening library access, as well as increased numbers of graduates with a professional need to embrace lifelong learning. As long as community users were low-impact the gesture of providing open access was more than compensated by the good-will generated. However, faced with growing demand and insufficient facilities and resources for primary clientele the argument was made by Bailey in 1961 that the 'attitude that libraries should be open to everyone is a fallacy, that services are not free but incur costs somewhere ... that access is a courtesy,

not a right, and that charging fees is acceptable since students have to pay a fee through tuition' (Courtney 2001, p.474).

In response to Courtney's recent survey, 5.1% of libraries indicated that it was not part of their mission to serve unaffiliated users but most did, on some basis, including fee paying. Most libraries regard unaffiliated clients as secondary clientele. In Australia with open access to the physical facility the norm, most community members have been able to access our collections and obtain reference assistance but not borrow. UTS Library's experience of the growing impact of unaffiliated users on library services and facilities is reflected in Courtney's historical account.

Accessing much information involves the use of computers. In recent years access to information by independent scholars has been threatened as academic libraries have begun to cancel print subscriptions and move from printed resources available on open shelves to electronic resources accessible only via computers requiring authentication. Despite provisions for 'walk-in' access in most licence agreements, the independent scholar is faced with a growing body of potentially inaccessible information. In the context of the IFLA *Statement on Open Access to Scholarly Literature and Research Documentation* librarians need to argue for the widest possible access by the community to digital resources when we deal with contracts (Byrne 2004, p.13) and to find alternative means of authenticating those who would otherwise be blocked. Where wider access is permitted, many community users lack the skills to access information independently and need considerable assistance, particularly as they will normally not have attended information skills classes prepared for students. Reference questions from unaffiliated users have become some of the most time consuming.

In the past our universities were primarily government funded however in Australia today we receive a relatively small proportion of our recurrent funding from government sources. UTS currently receives only 32% of its recurrent funding from this source. The greatest proportion is derived from HECS or full-fee paying students who, along with UTS staff, constitute our primary clientele. Most members of the public are unaware of these funding shifts or of the fact that the Higher Education Funding Act proscribes the cross-subsidy of service delivery using these funds. University libraries are not usually funded to provide services to unaffiliated users. As a consequence, in recent years more and more university libraries have introduced community borrowing and other services on a fee-paying basis. UTS Library is no exception.

Librarians who have opposed the application of any such charges on the grounds that access to information should be 'free' have been 'castigated' in the past 'for woolly thinking in regarding information as a free good because its real cost is obscured through access without charge or subsidy' (D. Fielding as quoted in Byrne 2001, p. 5). Byrne also points to the confusion perpetuated in the English language due to the ambiguity of the word 'free'. The English speaking world's original concept of 'free public libraries' meant 'open to all' rather than 'gratis'. No such ambiguity exists in the French language in this context where the term 'libre' is used rather than 'gratuit'. According to Byrne, 'Despite some effective statements, Australian libraries have been timid to distinguish between services with community benefit and those which largely support private commercial gain' (2004, p.6).

Gems of NSW – a fee schedule for associate members
Recognising that there was unmet demand from unaffiliated

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users who were willing and able to pay for access to Library services, in 2001 UTS Library implemented a schedule of Associate membership categories with fees directly proportional to the services available. Two of the categories are designed for individuals in the community engaged in personal research – 'Opal' category which provides walk-in access for the cost of a Library card (\$5) but no borrowing, and 'Emerald' category which provides borrowing rights, access to reference assistance as well as walk-in access to databases and discounts on any other fee-based services we might offer across the three campus libraries. Other categories, 'Topaz', 'Sapphire', 'Amethyst' and 'Jasper' are available for groups such as students enrolled at other tertiary educational institutions, UTS short courses, local businesses and alumni. 'Ruby' equates with our highest level of service available to UTS students. All, except 'Opal', incur annual fees. All associate members are issued with Library ID cards which include a photograph, a unique barcode and a magnetic strip. These cards are generated by the one UTS ID card system which also generates UTS student and, latterly, staff cards.

Privacy implications

We might expect client concern at using a swipe card to enter the Library on privacy and confidentiality grounds as the potential to gather and store information electronically increases. As stated by Murray (2003, p.11), 'The protection of patron data has a long history in the ethics of the library profession'. Most librarians have won the trust of clients through demonstrated professional ethics such as 'accuracy, comprehensiveness, obligations to the client, responsibilities to the community and the long term commitment to preserve the record of knowledge' (Byrne 2004, p. 2). 'Obligations to the client' have included adherence to privacy policies.

Is it enough to suggest to our clients that they should 'trust us' with regard to the storing of personal data? As Iacovino (2002, p.59) states 'The need for assumed trust and truth is essential for social groups to survive'. On the basis of our past experience with circulation and information retrieval we can assert that there are strong precedents on which to base trust.

Such policies have seen patron transaction data retained for minimum periods only.

In today's environment though, many organisations are developing privacy policies and publicly committing to them. UTS Library is bound by the UTS Privacy Management Policy which is currently being updated. We are also developing our own Privacy statement to clients. This statement would need to include commitments relating to data collected via the access gates, possibly a first. The Association of Research Libraries *Library Patron Privacy SPEC Kit 278* (2003) includes a number of policy statements from its members but none includes any reference to this area of privacy.

The decision to go ahead

Having determined the ethical and operational frameworks in which we would function, we proceeded with the installation of access gates in the Blake Library in early 2003. In addition to our primary clientele, the wide range of unaffiliated individuals and groups provided for in the Associate Members schedule would be eligible for access to the Library either as infrequent visitors or on a regular basis, just as they were in our other two campus libraries where security was not such an issue. The main difference at the Blake Library was that students of private colleges would not be allowed 'Opal' access. For them to access the Blake Library, the

principals of the colleges, which are obliged to provide library services to fulfil their accreditation requirements, would need to enter into agreements with UTS Library and contribute to the cost of our providing access to resources and services.

Communication and consultation

Consultation with Library staff began as early as 2000 during Library strategic planning discussions. Some staff members were also involved in the working group mentioned previously and all staff were able to consider the recommendations of the group and came to understand how access by the community could be 'managed' rather than 'restricted'. The UTS community was furthered exposed to the idea in 2001 as part of the consultation process and communication strategy for a proposed Blake Library extension and refurbishment. A range of stakeholders were invited to focus groups, support from the Vice Chancellor was obtained, posters were displayed in the Library showing an artist's impression of the new gates, the Library Users' Committee was consulted, a meeting was held with representatives of the Students' Association and a range of other channels used to communicate the message prior to implementation. These included letters sent to all CAUL members and a special Access flier. In addition, a letter from the University Librarian to a number of anonymous but long-standing unaffiliated Library users inviting them to continue using the Library was handed out by shelving staff.

How the system works

For those interested in the detail, the gates are PNG Automatic Security Gate Type 363. The main control hardware is comprised of two Concept 4000's with customised parallel configuration to allow in excess of 100,000 users with customised interface boards for swipe card as the norm and proximity readers for people with disabilities.

The interface software is Accept Net. It logs and archives the history of user access through the gates with the time, date, user name and number. Access reports can be printed or exported as a text file. At this time it is not possible to sort by user or ID number and we are working to ensure that University privacy policies, to which Security Services as well as the Library must adhere, proscribe the retention of personalised data.

Managing access

Anyone wishing to use Blake Library facilities presents themselves at the Security Desk inside the entrance to the Library. All applicants for access are permitted entry on the first occasion provided they register on computers near the entrance and can produce adequate identification. A photo ID such as a current student or staff card or a driver's licence with local address suffices. Often one visit will satisfy the need to consult a particular book, or look around if they are a prospective student or parent of a prospective student. Lending Services staff located at the Enquiries and Loans Desk (ELD) nearby provide support for Security staff when needed.

Registration database

A simple database was created by UTS Library's Web Developer. It has since been refined to a very useful system with interfaces for Security staff, ELD staff and administrators. The solution uses a MySQL database with scripts written in PHP. It all runs on a Linux webserver. This setup is commonly referred to as LAMP (Linux Apache PHP/Python/PERL and MySQL). We are currently

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in the process of replacing the PHP scripts with Java using the Struts framework. It will then integrate with our single sign-on (for the administration, security and reporting interfaces).

The database consists of four components:

Registration

Users register through the front end. This is comprised of web forms which ask for information such as name and contact details, a street address, not a post office box, reason for wanting access to the Library, and a declaration stating whether they are enrolled in an award course, in which case they need to nominate the institution at which they are enrolled (using a drop-down menu). Those wishing to access the Library can also register online and determine whether they will be granted access before coming to the Library.

Day passes

Security staff use an interface that allows them to issue day passes or cards to users once they have registered and then check them in at return. 'Walk in' e-access provisions will soon be added as a feature of the database as we move to requiring authentication on all computers. This means that unaffiliated users will be able to access machines using a log-in linked to their day pass or Associate Member's card. This is an unanticipated positive by-product of installing the gates and an important consideration for us. We want to ensure that independent scholars are able to enter our Library and access the information they need, irrespective of its format. Fortunately, many licences now permit us to provide such access, an equally important consideration.

Administration of authorisation

The Administration interface allows designated Library staff members to authorise entry by community users. Back room Lending Services staff have been provided with guidelines by which to make judgements, and templates for standard reply letters.

Members of certain types of institutions have been excluded from eligibility for 'Opal' access to Blake Library. The institutions can generally be categorised as English language colleges, private training organisations or colleges running pre-tertiary courses. We allow access to year 11 and 12 high school students however. Applications from members of institutions already 'known' to the system are automatically allowed or disallowed based on policy decisions made previously. At the point of registration applicants selecting their institution from the drop down list are immediately shown a confirmation message on screen or a "sorry you are not eligible" message.

Staff assess applications from members of institutions "unknown" to the system, with a view to confirming their eligibility, as well as applications from individual community members. Community users are defined as "those who are not currently enrolled in an award course of study." Their research needs will usually be personal and they need to supply a reason for needing to use UTS Library as opposed to a public library. Applications giving only "study" or "research" as the reason are rejected. Information supplied needs to indicate the general subject area of interest but we do not require very specific detail to grant access. There are no geographical restrictions – community members do not have to live or work in the local area. Lending Services supervisors apply judgement in unclear situations which do not fit the guidelines provided.

All applicants are informed whether their application to continue accessing the Library as a visitor has been successful in a letter

generated once the decision is made the following day. Those not successful are invited to provide more information in support of their application. Many are successful at this stage. Anyone succeeding in gaining ongoing visitor entry will automatically be eligible for 'Opal' access for a year should they wish to apply. The card will usually be renewable. In cases of extreme hardship we are prepared to waive the cost of the card. Some approved applicants choose not to purchase a card. To minimise Security staff involvement in facilitating access such users are limited to five visits in the year. Each time they visit they need to show their approved photo identification to be issued with a day pass.

Reporting

The final component is a reporting function. This allows Library staff to run various reports such as "Which cards are currently out" and "Which cards are overdue", as well as to keep statistics on the number of cards issued to the various categories of Associate Member or day registrant and the number declined.

A year down the track

Preparation and Infrastructure

With the benefit of hind-sight we were not as well prepared as we might have been when we implemented the new access management system on April 29, 2003. Guidelines and training were prepared for Security staff and our own Lending Services staff who would provide back-up and issue Associate Members' cards. Anticipating a negative reaction from some quarters we attempted, through training, to prepare staff to handle and refer such responses. We also devised a registration system which was manual and paper based with accompanying guidelines for Security staff so that they could decide who should be allowed access. The data processing was to occur after the event. However the volume of applications was huge and Security staff quickly became overwhelmed with paper and filing backlogs. Security staff also found the authorisation guidelines too difficult to follow and the aggravation from any clients refused entry, too stressful.

We reviewed the situation after a few weeks of operation and decided to invest time and resources into putting together, very rapidly, the web-based online application system described above. Fortunately we had the IT expertise on site to do this. Once the new online registration system was in place and Security staff relieved of the need to make judgement calls on eligibility, the system began to operate smoothly.

Despite this, ongoing training is required. The Lending Service department has developed a procedures manual. Regular joint training sessions for Security and desk staff are held.

Community response

Negative feedback concerning the access gates related mainly to concern that we were restricting access to information for unaffiliated persons, that as tax-payers they had a right to access, that the University's reputation as a 'civic citizen' would be tarnished, that decisions to include or exclude might be made on spurious grounds e.g. based on physical appearance and that the \$5 charge for an 'Opal' card was the thin edge of the wedge which would ultimately increase to a level which would exclude the disadvantaged. The impression created by the presence of uniformed security personnel was also of concern to some. We did our best to explain the reasons why we had felt we had no option but to install the gates, to state our commitment to open access to information and to outline the practices and infrastructure

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we had implemented to ensure the outcomes people feared did not eventuate. In most cases we succeeded. Those invited to offer an alternative solution to managing the problems faced by UTS Library, whilst accepting the challenge, did not deliver.

Our colleagues in nearby universities were generally interested to monitor the impact of the gates, expressing only a mild concern that those no longer able to access UTS Library freely would move to their own institution. To date we have received no reports that unaffiliated users or security issues have been displaced to other institutions.

On an operational level, there were complaints as the system was first implemented. Despite our attempts at communicating the new arrangements, many UTS members arrived without their student or staff ID's or any form of identification. Some overseas visitors and /or academics also lacked the types of identification required. The fact that students could not bring friends with them unless they met our entry requirements was also unpopular. Such complaints have dwindled to almost nothing after one year.

Early teething problems with the system and the equipment were also evident and these have resurfaced again from time to time – particularly at the beginning of this academic year. The gates are larger than more modern models and some found the size confronting. The swipe card system also requires some mastery by clients. This, combined with software and access card problems, resulted in some queues both early on and again at the beginning of this year. We will certainly move to a 'proximity card' solution as soon as this is feasible. The manual registration system with Security staff involved in the decision making was not successful. Security officers were out of their depth when it came to determining whether a person met entry criteria. However, despite this we received only one or two complaints that Security staff had been officious. Considerable support was needed from senior managers to maintain good public relations during this period.

Outcomes

We moved quickly to address the issues within our control and positive outcomes from installing the gates were immediately obvious.

A safer and more secure environment

Personal property theft figures showed an immediate 71% decrease for the period May to June compared with the same period in the previous year. In the following six months, July to December 2003, the drop continued with thefts at one ninth of the previous level.

In September 2003, for the second consecutive year, UTS Library conducted a Library Client Survey using a survey instrument prepared by Rodski Research. 'The Library is a safe and secure place to study' was one of our top ten performing factors in 2003 in contrast to 2002. This recognised the success of the new policy and its implementation in securing the most important outcome of those which had been sought. The overwhelming importance of safety and security as an issue for our clients was also reinforced in May this year when we surveyed again using a different instrument, LibQual+.

Improved access to resources

Within two weeks we had data confirming our long-held suspicion that many of the local colleges were referring their students to UTS Library for the provision of information services, access to collections and study facilities. There were many more than we had expected: 73 private colleges were identified during the first year. Students from some of these colleges informed us that the college provided no such facilities for them. Such students were

not eligible to register for 'Opal' access, however as soon as they were identified, we sent out letters to the institutions explaining the change in our policy and inviting them to discuss a service agreement. Whilst a small number of colleges have expressed interest, only one at the time of writing has been prepared to pay what we have estimated to be an appropriate amount.

In May 2003 30% fewer people entered the Library than in the same month in 2002. Queues for assistance at the Research Help Desk were considerably reduced. Statistics for missing books reported by clients indicate a 50% decrease. There was a reduction in in-house shelving activity (i.e. reshelving of items consulted but not borrowed) from 79,076 in May 2002 to 58,660 in May 2003. Whether the availability of items has improved more than marginally as a direct result of installing the gates has been difficult to determine; we have addressed the findability issue on many fronts. However we will be interested to see the results of this year's CAUL Materials Availability Survey.

Continued access for personal researchers

Despite the drop in door count statistics, from the time we established the database to March this year out of a total of 9439 individuals who applied for access to the Blake Library, 8480 were approved. 7183 of those applying were students. Those approved visited the Library 12,308 times. 1656 'Opal' access cards were issued in 2003 and there were 6824 day visitors. In total 959 individuals were denied access on their first application. We know anecdotally that many were successful on their second application but have not been able to collect precise data through the system to date.

Interestingly, we have found that many students from other universities use up their five free access visits before applying for 'Opal' cards. As members of University Libraries of Australia (ULA) they are eligible for reciprocal borrowing privileges for the discounted rate of \$50 p.a. ('Topaz') but opt for non-borrowing access instead.

Evidence based decision making

Evidence based decision making is an important focus at UTS Library and we are keen to extract and analyse information from usage statistics and patterns to better align our service design and delivery with client needs and library usage. We are interested in data such as:

- Which faculties make most use of the Library's physical facilities and electronic resources?
- How often do research students and staff use our Library compared to undergraduates?
- How often do community members make use of our facilities and when?
- Which web pages register most hits and how do clients search for information on the web?

Some of this information could be gleaned from non-personal data collected from Library access cards if added features are acquired for the Accept Net gates software.

Conclusion

In the introduction to this paper we indicated our intention to challenge three notions.

The first of these related to perceptions that the installation of access gates must inevitably result in a restriction of access to information for the unaffiliated community member. As we hope to have shown, this notion was of concern to all of us at UTS

'But You're Restricting Access To Information' – The Ethical And Cultural Dimensions Of Installing Access Gates In The Uts City Campus Library (Blake Library)

Pamela Leuzinger, Director, Library Client Services Unit, and Beth Marnane, Lending Services Manager, University of Technology, Sydney Library.

Library as well as to some of our constituency. For that reason we developed policies and procedures to ensure access was maintained for those people who require our particular range of resources and services. Since the early days any negative feedback has related primarily to the inconvenience of the gates, rather than to cultural or ethical issues. We interpret this to mean that we have indeed achieved the balance we set out to achieve. We have created a safer environment where our primary clients have better access to facilities and services whilst providing open access to information for the unaffiliated community member with a personal research need to access our Library.

The second notion was that 'the community' has inalienable rights of unfettered access to university libraries. We have discussed the fact that although traditionally some level of access has been provided in Australia and the United States, most university libraries are not resourced to provide community access, nor is there a legislative basis to support such a claim. We believe that all academic libraries have an obligation to make the scholarly information they hold accessible to those *requiring* access however and that we are achieving this, not through a simple 'open door' approach but in a focussed fashion which may entail the payment of fees. Our schedule of fees ensures that those community members making more intensive demands on our services or who can afford to pay by virtue of their status as a business are contributing to UTS Library's resources just as our primary clientele does through tuition fees. We seek to make information accessible irrespective of format. Our access cards and registration database provide a means of access to authenticated machines for community members.

Finally, there was the notion that the electronic management of access through swipe cards or similar technologies will of itself result in an unjustifiable level of surveillance. The broader community's growing concern about privacy issues is evident to all of us; however no concern has been expressed in this context in relation to the access gates. Whilst card access to the Library has the potential to track the movements of individuals, the UTS Library access system has not been set up to provide such reports nor will it be. In much the same way as we currently use circulation data to predict and measure demand whilst vigorously defending each individual's right to privacy in relation to their borrowing record so too, the access system software will be developed to provide us with new management reports which also respect such rights. These reports will inform decision making in relation to resource planning and service alignment in a way previously not possible before the installation of the access gates. Our clients will be assured of our commitment to protecting their privacy and confidentiality through the development and promotion of a Library Patron Privacy Policy.

All in all we believe that the outcomes of this 'reluctant' first have been beneficial for both our primary clientele and for the wider community. They have provided a more secure environment in which all who need our services can gain enhanced access.

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INDEXING TERMS

Academic libraries, Unaffiliated users / Community, Security, Open access, Scholarly literature

Footnotes

- ¹ Courtney uses the term 'unaffiliated' to include groups we would regard as 'affiliated' eg alumni. In this paper we use the terms 'unaffiliated' and 'community' interchangeably.