

SO TELL ME WHAT YOU WANT: APPLYING EVIDENCE-BASED LIBRARIANSHIP TO THE USER EXPERIENCE IN A SPECIAL LIBRARY

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ABSTRACT

When the Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Water (NRW) Library Services was asked to undertake an internal review we saw it as an opportunity to examine our current suite of services. As part of the review the Library sought feedback from the staff of NRW on the services and resources that they saw as valuable or useful.

A survey was developed and emailed to all staff across Queensland. 22% of departmental staff responded to the survey, and with this level of feedback library staff were confident that the responses reflected the department's wants and needs and therefore moved towards developing a new suite of products.

This paper develops the reasons for choosing a survey as a means of gathering information, includes the survey questions and provides an analysis of the results. It describes the restructure of the library's products and services as a result of the survey. This process is ongoing, and includes enhancing and promoting those services that were identified by clients as very valuable as well as introducing new services, such as customised current awareness, news alerts and focussed training.

In brief 57.2% of respondents visit a NRW Library at least every few months; 65.1% of respondents visit the Library Services intranet site at least every few months. Although the service provided by Library Services staff was rated as excellent by those who used the library, 32.9% of respondents did not know they had access to library staff to help them find information.

Background

The Queensland agency now called the Department of Natural Resources and Water (NRW) was formed by the merger of the Department of Lands and the water resources component of the Department of Primary Industries in 1997. This necessitated many changes – a new library management system, developing a new team from existing staff, positioning the library within information management and the wider department.

The next major change happened in 2003 when the Department of Mines and Energy (DME) was merged with NRW. This amalgamation also brought changes – data conversion from a BRS database, the merger of collections and a redesign of the physical library setting. Similar sorts of management changes and restructures were involved in this Machinery of Government (MOG) change.

A period of stability followed, and the Library continued to deliver quality service – research/reference, interlibrary loans, training, etc as well as producing products that now look old fashioned i.e. web versions of contents pages.

2006 was very significant because it saw a restructure that increased the profile of Library Services, with the removal of one tier of upward reporting. The Library Manager now reported to a General Manager (GM) within a business unit which is now called Communications, Products and Library Services (CPLS.) At this time our GM had not had any experience in managing a library service and therefore potentially was not a strong advocate to defend the activities of NRW Library Services to senior management.

It was also during 2006 that the Library Services profile was raised by increased activities by the Research Librarians team. Wide promotion of a new database (Scopus) was conducted around the state and a new monthly email newsletter (the *Library Services Update*) was promoted. Both these new services were more professional in approach, using logos, banners, and professionally produced promotional material.

While this new approach was warmly received by clients, the increased profile also brought Library Services under the scrutiny of senior management. In NRW, the Executive Management Group (EMG) is made up of the Director-General, the Deputy Director-General and three Assistant Director-Generals.

Stakeholders

Library Services has two distinct groups of stakeholders – the clients who know us and love us, and EMG, who control the money but who do not use the products and services provided by Library Services. When EMG looked at the Library, they saw a staff-intensive business unit, and questioned the value of the Library to the agency and the return on their investment.

The survey

In 2006, EMG requested an internal review of Library Services with a brief of examining current and future requirements. Initially the thought of a review brought feelings of fear and trepidation, but it was soon seen as an opportunity to evaluate and consequently change processes, products and services currently being provided by Library Services. Before embarking on the future, information was sought from our clients on what we were currently doing. Previously we had surveyed only specific groups e.g. scientists/researchers, or services e.g. interlibrary loans. This time, instead of asking the clients who we knew about and who knew us, we decided to conduct a survey across the whole department to determine what they thought about our services. We knew we gave great service to the members of the department who needed our services, but were these services **really** what all the clients wanted? And what about those other staff who were unfamiliar with the kinds of services and resources available to them? So as well as evaluating the use of current products and services, a survey could also be a promotional and marketing opportunity and a chance to make contact with groups who perhaps did not know that the Library was for the whole department, not just for scientists and researchers.

Methodology

Survey Monkey was used to develop a survey of 26 questions. A full list of the questions is in Appendix A.

In 2006 NRW had 4500 staff in about 100 offices around Queensland. The staff is a mix of counter, administration, policy officers and scientists. All departmental staff were emailed a link to the survey and encouraged to complete it. As an extra incentive a prize was offered as a lucky draw for those who wanted to leave their contact details. Encouragingly about 22% of department staff completed the survey. Also encouraging was the fact that approximately 40% of responses came from regional centres. 60% of responses were from locations in Brisbane where the majority of staff are located. (Questions 23 and 24)

Analysis of survey results

Use of the Library

Perhaps not so encouraging was the fact that 10% of the respondents said that they did not know the department had a Library Service (question 1). Question 22 confirmed this when 31% responded that they would like to use the Library Service more but didn't because they were unaware of the services and resources available. 28% were too busy to use the service and 26% didn't use it because they were in a regional location and therefore did not think they were eligible.

Questions 2 and 3 related to whether staff physically visited one of the three library locations. Nearly 40% said they had never physically been to a NRW Library. 8% said they visit weekly, 15% monthly and 33% every few months. As expected the location most visited was that in the Head Office.

Despite being a featured link on the front of the department's intranet site, 10% of respondents indicated that they did not know that Library Services had an intranet site. Most respondents (40%) indicated that they go to the site at least monthly, and 25% had never visited it. (Question 4)

Staff

The next set of questions (5 -7) related to library staff. Respondents were asked to rate library staff they had dealt with in relation to friendliness, timeliness, communication with clients, relevance of information provided, understanding of resource/services. To all questions library staff were rated as excellent. Most respondents preferred to communicate with Library Services staff via email (44%) but a still significant number (40%) also want to deal with someone in person.

Services

Of the range of services (questions 8-10) provided by Library Services, 75% rated the overall quality as good or excellent. The highest indicator of use was the Library catalogue where 32% of respondents indicated that they use it every few months, and 13% used it weekly. Loans from our own collections and from other libraries were highly valued as a service, with over 60% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that this service helped them with their work.

In 2006 Library Services produced three monthly lists posted on the departmental intranet. These lists converted print journal content pages of subscribed titles into web based table of contents grouped by subject i.e. Mines, Water, and Sustainable Landscapes. The limited usage of these lists, which required significant staff time and energy to produce, was highlighted by the survey responses. For example, only 13% of respondents accessed the Mines Update monthly or every few months, and only 11% agreed that the Mines Update helped them do their job.

Research services

Library management wanted to know if departmental staff were aware they had access to library staff to do research on their behalf and how important this service was for the quality of their work (questions 11 and 12). 67% of respondents were aware and 69% agreed it was important.

Questions 13 and 14 were designed to create awareness of the fact that their research librarian was able to proactively provide relevant material in their area of interest. Only 36% said it was useful for their work, but 64% said they would find this service useful, now that they were aware of it.

Training

Questions 15-17 were designed to promote the training provided by the library. 38% of respondents had participated in training. The main reason for non-participation was the fact that they did not know any was available. Those clients who had attended training rated literature database training as the most useful.

Resources

Of the range of services provided by Library Services (question 18 – 20), the most heavily used were books (68%). However, print and online journals (58%) and databases (54%) also rated highly. Similar results were repeated in the question about whether these resources were important for their work. The last question in this section listed ten databases to which the library subscribed. Scopus was the clear winner, with 36% rating it as the most used.

How do I find information?

Question 21 was designed to ascertain the information seeking behaviour of departmental staff. 82% searched the internet themselves, 50% asked colleagues, 45% used online databases and 42% contacted the Library.

What happened after the survey

Use of the Library

The survey was our first major marketing initiative, and undoubtedly was effective. We were surprised that 10% of the respondents said that they did not know the department had a Library Service and 31% responded that they would like to use the Library Service more but didn't because they were unaware of the services and resources available. This was in spite of the fact that there is a link to the Library on the front page on the NRW intranet. The clear message that we got from the survey was the importance of continuing to promote our products and services. This is an area in which

we can have a major impact with very little effort. Staff at all levels are now aware that the Library provides a wide range of information, e.g. the management and general books are heavily used. Regional staff now know they have access to a library and a Research Librarian. The Research Librarian responsible for these staff has developed a list of email groups which covers all regional staff.

Staff

We were very pleased with the results of this section of the survey. This was an obvious strength we could build on and the survey certainly opened the door to future communication. Library Services had already used a liaison librarian model but the role of the Research Librarian is now promoted more heavily. Each division of the department has its own Research Librarian. Clients have a named Research Librarian as their point of contact – or, as we like to say, everyone in the department has their own Research Librarian. The Research Librarians have developed relationships with their staff, and built up their subject expertise and skills.

Services

The survey provided very useful feedback on the value of existing products and services. The low usage of the three monthly compilations of print journal content pages of subscribed titles (the Mines Update, the Water Update and the Sustainable Landscapes Update) meant that decision was easily and quickly made to stop producing these. It was obvious that there were alternative ways of offering better services, i.e. the scatter-gun approach of the previous Updates should be replaced by a value-added product.

The monthly newsletter (*Library Services Update*) has been improved. Based on their knowledge and understanding of the information needs of their clients, the Research Librarians select key relevant journal articles and online documents.

Intranet statistics are analysed to evaluate which products and services are being used. For example, the *Library Services Update* receives between 700 and 1,200 hits a month. Statistics on a range of products and services (including loans, interlibrary loans, queries, research, database usage, online journal downloads and training) are collected. These are pushed upwards via our GM (general manager?) on a monthly and quarterly basis. An annual report of key performance indicators is published.

Research services

This is the area in which the biggest changes have been made. There has been a fundamental shift in our approach to how we deal with our clients. The responses to questions 13 and 14 (64% said they would find useful the service from their Research Librarian of proactively providing relevant material in their area of interest) gave the Research Librarians the confidence to be more proactive in sending relevant material to their clients. Previously we had developed lists of names of those who wanted to be on the mailing lists for certain products, we now push such products as the monthly e-newsletter (the *Library Services Update*) to everyone in the department, including EMG. Products that we purchase, e.g. *Land and Water News*, are also now sent to everyone.

Conversations that grew out of the survey made us aware that customisation of services was important for our clients. The Research Librarians have worked extensively with their clients to set up individual subject alerts, particularly on Scopus. We also encourage clients to let us know if there are journals (whether or not we subscribe to them) that are useful for their research. We then set up electronic table of content alerts (eToCs) for them.

A new initiative has been the introduction of a suite of news alerts. These are created from a range of internet and online news sources on a daily, weekly, fortnightly and monthly basis by the Research Librarians. They provide timely and relevant information, resulting in improved departmental awareness. They also contribute to increased productivity by freeing up staff time that would otherwise be spent searching for news items. A list of the current news alerts is in Appendix B.

The value of the news alerts is demonstrated by the number of recipients. For example, the daily Water Reform Alert originally went to about six people, and is now sent to almost 90. Feedback was obtained in 2008 when the Library Managers nominated the Research Librarians team for a NRW Business Excellence Award. The nomination was based on the value of the suite of news alerts. As part of the nomination process, we emailed all recipients of the alerts for testimonials. We received many glowing testimonials, and a typical response was -

The daily Water Reform Alerts have played an integral part in my getting on top of my new area of responsibility, having moved to Water from Pest Management in 2007. Knowing what is in the media, ranging from small local Queensland papers to national broadsheets and radio gives me a finger on the pulse without the effort of searching the sources myself. I have used the media links provided to give a community focus to parliamentary speeches and to keep my managers informed. Knowing that I will have a complete summary of media by lunchtime every day allows me to spend morning working without the pressure of scanning papers, listening to the radio or online sources saving me time and resources. It's also great to be able to know what is happening in the news in regional centres when I am talking to staff outside SEQ.

Training

The main reason for non-participation in training was the fact that staff did not know any was available. Yet again, the importance of promotion was highlighted. Training has always been a prime activity for the Research Librarians, and we continue to deliver group sessions, and also one-on-one training, especially to staff in the regions.

We've improved our evaluation forms, to give us better information on future training needs.

Training for staff in Brisbane is more formalised – we offer fortnightly introductory sessions in Mineral House (the head office of the department) and training dates are in the calendar on the NRW intranet.

Resources

The survey revealed that our book collection was the most heavily used of the range of services provided by the Library. Because of this, we now treat the monthly New Books Lists as a key product and it is sent to all staff. We also promote the catalogue in

training sessions. We can measure the effectiveness of the New Books Lists by the large response in terms of number of requests for reservations. This often brings new staff to our attention, who are then registered as borrowers and given an introduction to our products and services.

How do I find information?

As a result of the fact that 82% of respondents used the internet to find information, we have introduced training sessions on the most effective ways to find information on the internet. This training also includes a warning that information should be sought from books and journals, not just the internet.

We have also created a subject gateway that has links to search engines (primary, secondary, academic), directories, invisible web databases and directories and explains web 2.0 technology (last point doesn't make sense).

The fact that 50% of respondents asked a colleague for information indicates more people we convert to library champions, will recommend the library as the best place to go for information.

Other outcomes of the survey

Promotion to all clients has continued to be a prime activity –

- working with communications staff, we produced a very professional brochure which we customise for staff with the name of their Research Librarian, their library number and their PIN
- a tag – *Need information?...the Library, naturally* – is used on all promotional material
- a Library Services template is used for promotional emails
- handouts of relevant resources are prepared for all departmental information sessions which are held periodically to raise awareness of current work and associated projects
- branding is used extensively
- cross promotional opportunities are utilised, e.g. link to the Library in handouts; tips about other products and services in emails; sell other less well-known products and services via the popular ones

We have several indicators that the profile of the Library has increased –

- it has been accepted by EMG that all departmental publications should be held in the Library, and a huge number were obtained in 2007
- anecdotal and concrete evidence indicates that business units now think of the Library first when it comes to managing information and resources
 - one business group recently paid for an Elsevier backfile package of online journals
 - the same group gave us \$5,000 to spend on management books
 - the number of Permanent Loans has increased. These are books paid for and held permanently by an officer, but ordered and catalogued by the Library

- when the Scopus subscription came up for renewal late in 2007, we were successful in obtaining the money from EMG
- in 2008, in conjunction with Elsevier, we ran a Scopus quiz to raise awareness of the product and in particular new functionality. Almost 600 staff entered – about 20% of the department. We had run a similar quiz in 2006 when 300 people entered – 8% of the department at that time. The fact that we had such a significant increase in the number of entries is a testimonial to the continued work of the Research Librarians in promoting awareness of and training in the effective use of this subscription database
- the Library is always included in the programme for the quarterly *Managing in NRW* workshops and the annual new graduates induction sessions
- an online learning programme and a DVD about the department for new staff was developed in 2007, and a section on the library was included
- our General Manager is now a strong advocate for Library Services, e.g. he recently promoted our daily Water Reform News Alert to EMG members; he provided the money for a new Library Management System

Where to from here

The survey was successful, informative and valuable, but we want to keep our clients engaged with fresh approaches. So we've adopted other evidence-based tools, such as mini surveys; inviting ongoing feedback from clients; proactive liaison between the Research Librarians and their clients; and training evaluation forms.

Statistics don't tell the whole story. It's not just quantity; quality is just as important. As well as the range of statistics collected, we have received very positive anecdotal feedback which shows us that we are hitting the right targets for our clients and that we are having a positive impact on how they do their jobs. It has been acknowledged by our GM and ADG that the profile of the Library is much higher now than it was in 2006, but we must continually work at maintaining this position.

We are also strongly committed to continuous improvement. This has been done through the formal Business Improvement @ Work programme run by NRW which has given us a framework to look at our processes and service delivery in a critical way. All library staff participated in this process in 2007, focussing on a specific area of their daily work. The programme included analysing the requirements of specific services for ourselves and our clients, calculating the Price of Non-conformance (PONC) and identifying ways to eliminate non-conformance. Our GM and ADG were invited to the presentations made at the end of the programme.

Following on from this programme, we recently completed a team diagnostic questionnaire. Analysis of the results was presented at a workshop. Areas for future work were identified, and some practices have already been put in place. We're now half-way through a series of workshops entitled "Conversations in the workplace" which cover listening skills, the basic linguistic acts, the power of language, emotions in the workplace, making and managing commitments and relationship management.

We would like to survey usage again in the future, looking, not only at how many clients or which clients use particular products and services, or how often, but also why (they use certain products) and how they use the information once they get it. We want to know how they may want their information delivered to them in the future and what sort of information they'll need. We would also like to target departmental staff who are non-users now but potential future users, and identify how we can reach them.

We feel that a major marketing or promotional exercise every two years is a good strategy. In 2008 we ran a Scopus quiz, so we are planning another survey in 2010. However, any future survey would not simply be a repetition of the 2006 survey questions. Our purpose and goals would be reassessed and our questions re-formulated accordingly. We may also need to reassess our target group. But that is another paper for another time.

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF PRESENTER

Anne Tobin, Acting Library Manager, Queensland Dept of Natural Resources and Water

Anne is currently Library Manager in the Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Water. She has been in this position (either full-time or as a job share) since October 2006. Before that, she was Senior Research Librarian in the same department. Anne's (long) career has been in academic and special libraries in Brisbane and London.

Appendix A

Survey questions

1. Did you know that NRW has a Library Service
 - Yes/No

2. How often do you visit a NRW Library
 - Daily
 - Weekly
 - Monthly
 - Every few months
 - Never
 - Did not know existed

3. Which Library do you visit most often
 - Landcentre
 - Indooroopilly
 - Mineral House
 - Never visited

4. How often do you visit the NRW Library Services intranet site
 - Daily
 - Weekly
 - Monthly
 - Every few months
 - Never
 - Did not know existed

5. Do you deal directly with library staff
 - Yes/No

6. How would you rate Library staff you have dealt with in:

- Friendliness
- Timeliness
- Communication with clients
- Relevance of information provided
- Understanding of library resources/services

Poor/Fair/average/Good/Excellent/Don't know

7. How would you prefer to communicate with Library staff

- Phone
- Email
- Online
- In person

8. How would you rate the overall quality of the services provided by NRW Library Services

Poor/Fair/Average/Good/Excellent/Don't know

9. I use these services provided by Library Service

- Library Services newsletter
- Mines Update
- New books list
- Subject toolkits
- Sustainable landscapes update
- Water update
- Library catalogue
- Loans
- ILLs

Daily/Weekly/Monthly/Every few months/Never/Did not know existed

10. These services provided by NRW Library Services assist me in doing my job

- Library Services newsletter
- Mines Update
- New Books list
- Subject toolkits
- Sustainable Landscapes Update
- Water Update
- Library catalogue
- Loans
- Loans form other organisations

Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree, Strongly agree

11. Did you know that you have access to library staff to help you do your work (i.e. investigate a topic of interest, do research for you, find information).
- Yes/Did not know

12. It is important to my work that I have access to Library staff for research.

Strongly disagree/Disagree/Neither agree nor disagree/Agree/Strongly agree

13. Library staff know what topics interest me and send me unrequested material (i.e. photocopies, electronic documents, websites). Receiving this material saves me time and is useful to my work.

Strongly disagree/Disagree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Agree/Strongly agree

14. If you knew more about the information service do you think you or your group would use it
- Yes/No/Don't know

15. Have you participated in any training/information sessions in the use of any Library resources/services?
- Yes/No

16. I have not attended any training/information sessions because

Too busy/Did not know any was available/Not offered at my location/Not relevant to my work/Not interested/Other

17. Please rate your level of agreement with this statement. The training/information session I attended assisted me in using the resources/services more effectively.
- Databases
 - Journals
 - Library catalogue
 - Internet training
 - Library services
 - Other

Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither, Agree, Strongly agree/Not attended

18. I use these resources provided for the department by NRW Library Services.
- Print journals
 - Online journals
 - Books
 - Databases

Daily/Weekly/Monthly/Every few months/Never/Not sure

19. The resources provided by NRW Library Services are important for my work

- Print journals
- Online journals
- Books
- Databases

Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither, Agree, Strongly agree

20. These databases are provided for anyone in the department to use. Which databases do you use

- AusGeoRef
- Scopus
- CaseBase legal resources
- Informit
- Emerald
- Business Source Premier
- Water Resources Abstracts
- Weed Abstracts
- RefWorks
- Standards Australia Online
- Don't know
- Don't use
- Other

21. When I need information I

- Contact the library
- Search the internet myself
- Use the online databases
- Use resources purchased by my business unit
- Ask colleagues
- Other

22. I would like to use the NRW Library Services more but don't because

- I am too busy
- Did not know it existed
- Did not know about the services available
- Am in a regional location
- The resource I need are not available
- Other

23. Where are you located

24. Which Business Unit do you work in

Appendix B

News Alerts

Clean Energy Alert

The Clean Energy Alert is a twice-weekly email alert containing news items relating to clean energy, emissions and emissions trading. The alert is designed to keep staff up to date with breaking news in relation to clean energy initiatives.

Compliance Alert

The Compliance Alert is a fortnightly email alert containing news items, links to articles, reports and book references regarding environmental compliance and enforcement issues. The alert is designed to keep staff up to date with current initiatives in environmental compliance and enforcement.

Science Alert

The Science Alert is a monthly email alert containing news items describing scientific reports, discoveries and programs of interest to the department.

Urban Water Alert

The Urban Water Alert is a fortnightly email alert containing news items, links to articles, reports and book references regarding urban water development and water sensitive urban design principles. The alert is designed to keep staff up to date with issues in water development in urban areas.

Water Reform Alert

The Water Reform Alert is a daily email alert containing Australian news items and media releases regarding a range of issues impacting on water policy. The email is designed to keep staff up to date with breaking news in relation to water initiatives.

Weed and Feral Alert

The Weed and Feral Alert is a weekly email alert containing Australian news items relating to weed management and feral animal control. The alert is designed to keep staff abreast of new policies and programs in weed and pest management in Australia.

