

Not yours, not mine... but *ours*: integrating learning skills for integrated learning

Judith Peacock
Integrated Literacies Coordinator
Library | Queensland University of Technology

Abstract

In 2007, QUT's Division of Technology, Information and Learning Support implemented a collaborative model of service and support for learning skills. Involving a strategic partnership between the Library and Teaching and Learning Support Services (TALSS), this model sees Library staff also assuming responsibility for point-of-need support and ongoing development of academic study skills as well as information literacy. This paper outlines the major outcomes of the project and highlights ongoing initiatives to extend the model to incorporate resource provision and curriculum development. The paper elaborates and reflects on the strategic and operational processes, managerial strategies, staffing and resourcing issues, and evaluation and reporting methodologies involved in applying this model within the context of a large, multi-campus academic institution. Finally, the paper analyses the success or otherwise of the initiative, and critiques the achievements, challenges and issues born as a result of the process.

Keywords

Information literacy; academic literacy; collaboration; student learning support; client service models.

Introduction

In 2007, QUT's Division of Technology, Information and Learning Support implemented a collaborative model of learning service and support for academic and information literacy. This model looks beyond the traditional centre-based models of learning support to one which responds to changing imperatives for providing more extensive support for more students in more flexible ways. Involving a strategic partnership between the Library and Teaching and Learning Support Services (TALSS), this model sees a coalescing of services, support and resources, and has involved addressing processes, principles and practices to ensure it can be easily but effectively applied within the context of a large, multi-campus university. Specifically, the approach has targetted strategic and operational processes, coordination and managerial strategies, staffing and resourcing issues, and evaluation and reporting methodologies. It also introduces the notion of professional library staff assuming responsibility for point-of-need support and ongoing development of academic literacy as well as information literacy.

Defining the literacies

The two literacies that lie at the heart of the blended approach are information literacy and academic literacy. Each is a discourse in its own right, with a substantial weight of research and evidence-based practice to guide teaching and learning strategies. Each falls within a specific field of professional governance, and within the domain of professional staff with specific qualifications and expertise in the discourse. Both discourses overlap in a number of critical concept/skills areas and are founded on a principle that these skills are most effectively learned and applied when blended with the learning and teaching of other critical skills (such as critical thinking and problem solving) *within the context of a discipline*. Both share commonalities in goals, principles and praxes which centre on embedding these literacies as key capabilities into the *whole* learning experience. Practitioners in both realms understand that this process necessitates a reconstructive, reformational approach to tertiary education, that demands a collaborative process of sensemaking, interpretive strategy and coalition-building to be successful.

Information literacy

Broadly, information literacy is a keystone capability that allows for productive and fulfilling personal, career and educational outcomes, and enhances the adaptability and autonomy of and for students. Information literacy is founded in a deeply held belief that access to information is a basic human right that preserves independence, fuels lifelong learning, and enables individuals to participate fully in the knowledge-based society. It embraces the notion that information is a precondition for equality when empowerment also exists. Specifically, information literacy is accepted as an intellectual framework for recognising the need for, understanding, finding, evaluating, and using information. Information literacy knowledge and behaviours are supported in part by fluency with information technology, in part by sound investigative methods, but most importantly through critical discernment and reasoning (Bundy, 2004b). Typically, information literacy falls within the professional domain of librarians.

Building information literacy knowledge and abilities requires development to be woven into the content, structure, and sequence of curriculum (Bundy, 2004b) and there is an extensive body of literature and research (Catts, 2004; Bundy, 2004a; Bruce, 2002; Ryan, 2001; Gillespie & Brooks, 2001; Rader, 1999; Radomski, 1999; Peacock, 2006) which advocates the imperative to look beyond the “skills inoculation” or “one-shot” model of instruction to a robust “viral” model of information literacy education. Although theoretical models place information literacy learning variously as behavioural, relational (Bruce, 1997), procedural (Kuhlthau, 2004) and experiential (Lupton, 2004), all work from the principle that it must be “necessarily demonstrated in a context and within a domain of content” (Catts, 2004) where a fusion of discipline and generic knowledge and skills draws upon the full potential of problem-based learning experiences and critical thinking development (Peacock, 2005).

Academic literacy

While there is international usage and acceptance of the terminology and attributes of information literacy, for “academic literacy” the distinctions are not as clear or generally agreed. This domain is broadly defined as encompassing knowledge, concepts and skills that address study effectiveness and scholastic achievement. Specifically, the focus falls on writing, notetaking, concept mapping, time management, synthesis and critical thinking. Typically, academic literacy falls within the domain of professionals variously title writing instructors, language and learning advisors, or academic skills advisors. This paper will use the latter term to describe the professional domain of this literacy.

Like information literacy, Elmborg (2005) argues that academic literacy is a process-to-product model with a genesis in constructivist learning theory that is often approached in institutions as remediated and decontextualised strategies of support and development. Strategies vary across countries and institutions, but typically take the form of writing programs or courses framed by supplementary student consultation and resource provision. Fundamentally, however, there is agreement that academic literacy is a learning process that focuses on language as the key building block of knowledge, and writing as a way of learning, expressing and thinking (Vygotsky, 1962). For Ganobcsik-Williams (2006), it is a capability that is emerging as a dominant way to theorise student writing in academia which challenges the traditional deficit models of skills development and socialisation.

The argument for coalescence

Most universities offer programs, services and resources which seek to increase the capacity of students to self-manage and succeed in an academic environment. While these strategies cover a range of capabilities, consistent attention in two areas of literacy (academic and information) address skills in and of study and time management, writing, researching, information management and the use of technology. Typically, activities and resources in these literacies are discipline-neutral, sit outside the academy and - in many cases - are disassociated from the other in terms of content, development, delivery and student engagement. Yet, in terms of scholarship, both literacies engage students in performing one singular activity of academia - scholarly inquiry (Fister in Sheridan, 1995).

While there are differences inherent in each discourse, there are many similarities and complementarities in and of underlying assumptions and the practice of the two professional groups. Librarians and academic skills advisors spend time with a high volume of students, assessing their academic needs, assisting them to focus on a topic and build discipline knowledge, and recommending strategies to assist them to meet their study commitments under time pressures

(Elmborg, 2005; Young, 2008; Isabell, 2008). Both groups focus on product and process, and share aspirations for and strategies that address scholastic efficiencies, retention and success for students. They hold deeply to the belief that learning pathways and experiences must facilitate deep learning and cogent transitions and foster scholarly self-sufficiency and self-determination, and they rely on institutional policies, procedures and initiatives to frame their activities. Librarians and advisors also share similar professional beliefs in their roles and responsibilities to and within higher education and the educational community of their organisations, as well as a responsibility to act as reflective and informed practitioners who lead and guide at many levels within those organisations (Fister in Sheridan, 1995; NACADA, 2004). Finally, as Elmborg (2005) notes, both groups of professionals often work with anomalous status without faculty status or prestige within institutions dominated by abstraction and intellectualisation that underestimate the practical concerns of writing and researching for undergraduate students.

In reporting the results of her own survey of librarians and writing instructors (sic), Fister also highlights a number of other shared concerns and assumptions regarding the “failure” of students to give adequate time to research projects/papers, define research topics and to distinguish the degrees of difficulty and effort posed by a given task or assignment. It is her contention that while research processes are “treated as a separate activity, fit in somewhere between forming a topic and reading and writing about it, we are not practicing what we preach” (ibid, p. 46) and that the implications are clear - services and support in these areas must strive to create stronger linkages for students between reading, writing and research which acknowledges and promotes these domains as a single recursive scholarly process.

However, in most universities, these scholastic domains remain functionally, operationally, economically and physically cloistered. Each professional area works in relative but differential ignorance of the scope and operations of the other, often expending ever-constrained time and resources to provide similar learning tools and opportunities for students. Individuals, within the scope of their domain, engage in the same discussions and initiatives within their organisations, and strive to find similar solutions to resolve similar problems. Ironically, in some cases, support services and resources appear so disparate that students and faculty have difficulty associating their needs with the opportunities that are at their disposal, and so underutilise those services and resources thereby placing the services themselves at risk of dissolution.

Academic advisors and librarians are aware of these disconnects in terms of student need, discourse and support provision, and are often frustrated by organisational, professional and/or resource constraints. Many universities have sought to address this disconnect by physically co-locating “writing centres” within or close to libraries, with the argument that libraries are familiar, comfortable and frequently used student spaces within institutions (Mahaffy, 2007). However, there is little evidence to suggest that this is a cooperative strategy that does little more than ensure greater visibility and access to all services, and make referral across services easier. It does not address the essential nature of the learning and development that the services are seeking to engender and support.

Integrating the literacies: the QUT experience

Simmons-Welburn et al (2008, p. 130) argue that “universities can no longer afford incremental shifts, with their unintended consequences of muddling through rather than solving problems” but rather must undertake dramatic action and contend with the associated apprehension brought about by constant transformational change. For Drucker and Senge (in ibid), this is a process which demands that organisations and people challenge assumptions and practices, and abandon old forms of service to allow for new. Change such as this often simply requires a pilot group or opportunity where theory and practice and new ideas can coalesce, and Simmons-Welburn et al (2008) believe that libraries provide an opportunity in academic institutions for this transformational coalescence to occur.

TALSS and the Library have provided an opportunity for such coalescence to unfold. By addressing the critical success factors outlined by Mattessich (in Haycock, 2007) of environment, membership, process and structure, communication, purpose and resources, aligning the support processes for academic and information literacy presents to QUT a more accurate model of academic product/process by integrating information searching and knowledge-generation with the rhetorical dimensions of reading and writing (Fister in Sheridan, 1995).

In all respects, the model signals a broader shared Divisional commitment to the provision and continuous improvement of client-focused educational services, resources and support. This goal arises from articulating a shared vision, and from within an environment that establishes and fosters trust and communication, encourages joint ownership and articulation of purpose and outcomes, and brings shared practical and theoretical insights to solve the challenges at hand (ibid). It is a collaboration which, at its core, produces a positive effect on student achievement, leads to stronger relationships, growth of the educational environment and the professionals within that environment, and places TALSS and the Library as more legitimate leaders in the QUT educational community (Elmborg, 2005; Haycock, 2007).

In redefining services and support, the integrated literacies model entails a strategic shift in functional responsibility for teaching and learning support of academic study skills - a shift which affects all faculties and a significant number of administrative support services across the University. It also intersects with a range of significant QUT-wide student-focussed initiatives, such as first year experience, transitions (in, through and out), student portals and e-portfolios. The model directly and indirectly affects planning and quality assurance activities, key policy documents, vision statements and procedural frameworks across QUT and the Division.

QUT Overview

The University

QUT is one of the largest Australian universities, with an enrolment averaging approximately 40 000 students in undergraduate and postgraduate courses distributed across four campuses. QUT aspires for graduates to possess knowledge, professional competence, a sense of community responsibility, and a capacity to continue their professional and personal development throughout their lives. As such, the University frames discipline-based learning within the broader development of graduate capabilities as a set of important values, attitudes, knowledge and skills which QUT expects that graduates should develop as part of their learning. Since 2006, a series of Teaching and Learning Priority Projects and an increased focus on first year experience has resulted in significant positive strategies to improve the student experience, while expanding the purview of the management, coordination and development of services and activities that directly impact upon students.

The Division of Technology, Information and Learning Support

The Division of Technology, Information and Learning Support (TILS) plays a central role in advising faculties and divisions on the management of information as a critical university resource. The five departments/sections that constitute the Division (Information Technology, Library, Teaching and Learning Support, Integrated Help and QUT Printing) provide critical support for the academic functions of faculties, and technological support for communication and administration within all areas of the University (QUT TILS, 2008).

The Library

QUT Library provides high quality client and liaison services and innovative access to information resources. The executive leadership team oversees a complement of approximately 180 staff and branch-based physical resources and services distributed across four campuses. The Library's vision is articulated in four critical areas of teaching and learning, research, community engagement and resources. The Library also undertakes and leads extensive generic, integrated and curriculum-based information literacy education, resource development and practice that closely aligns with the *Australian/New Zealand Information Literacy Standards* as a framework for embedding information literacy into the design and teaching of educational courses, programs and assessment. This work is the functional co-responsibility of approximately 55 full and part-time professional staff (25 Liaison Librarians, 27 Reference Librarians, the Advanced Information Retrieval Skills (AIRS) Librarian, Information Literacy Convenor, and Integrated Literacies Coordinator), with direct reporting lines to 9 managers.

Teaching & Learning Support Services

Teaching and Learning Support Services (TALSS) provides leadership and support in the implementation of strategic university initiatives for learning and teaching, and employs a

multidisciplinary team of staff to deliver services to QUT staff and students. The work of the department seeks to build and maintain excellence in the teaching capability of academic staff, provide support in developing flexible online learning environments, and to lead and improve student learning support services by face to face, print and online means that support students in developing their study and academic capabilities. Student-facing activities and resource development is undertaken by two Academic Skills Advisors (with a direct report line to a senior manager), and the additional involvement each semester of 14 experienced Peer Advisors (PAALs) who provide point-of-need guidance for students. The Academic Skills Advisors provide individual consultations for students on referral from faculty and other student support areas (such as Counselling Services).

The Integrated Literacies Project: background

The project commenced in June 2006, under the sponsorship of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, TILS and with the direction of the Library and TALSS Senior Executive as Project Steering Group. Two project leaders representing each department (Service Manager/TALSS and Information Literacy Coordinator/Library) were seconded for a period of three months to establish a project plan and recommendations. Following approval of the plan, the Library and TALSS jointly appointed the Information Literacy Coordinator as "Integrated Literacies Coordinator" to work across departments to progress the implementation of the integrated helpdesk service model as Phase 1 of three project phases. In the interim, the existing operational and administrative responsibilities of the Information Literacy Coordinator role were devolved to the Library's Information Literacy Advisory Team, under the leadership of a half-time appointment of Convenor.

The project examined issues, constraints and advised recommendations in full consideration of (i) the broader strategic context of QUT such as the student experience, teaching quality priorities, First Year Experience (FYE) initiatives, graduate capabilities, work-integrated learning, and career pathways for students; and (ii) the operational context of QUT such as support services, course development processes and generic skills development. The project was guided by, and drew from, (i) information, ideas, concepts and beliefs arising from a number of staff focus groups, (ii) the theory and practice drawn from the literature, with a significant focus on the practice of other Australian institutions, and (iii) interpretation of these aspects with a view to establishing concepts, frameworks and terminology which reflects the QUT environment in terms of strategies, goals, processes, systems and practices.

The integrated literacies project thus evolved as three key strategies with recommendations:

1. Extended point-of-need assistance at Library Help Desks (Phase 1)
 - investigate and operationalise a Divisional triage model of study skills support at all Library Help Desk service points whereby Library staff provide first-contact assistance and referral.
2. Consolidated learning resources, workshops and online tutorials (Phase 2)
 - investigate and implement strategies for integrating and expanding TILS learning support of academic and information literacy via blended access to/availability of physical resources (print materials, guides, reference tools, etc), virtual resources (webpages, knowledge systems, learning resources and tutorials, etc) and staffing resources (consultation and referral, etc).
3. Blended approaches to curriculum development and assessment (Phase 3)
 - expand existing models and/or strategies to implement blended/embedded academic and information literacy learning and development via QUT course, curriculum, assessment and classroom processes.

The outcomes of a number of initial activities predicated the recommendations for these strategies, including:

1. extensive consultation with stakeholders such as students, academic and professional teaching staff, student administration support staff and student learning support/service areas (via focus groups and feedback on draft documents);
2. agreement on key terms and definitions to promote a commonality of language, understanding and practice around "academic literacy";
3. mapping of those academic literacies to highlight complementarities and points of difference in existing services and activities provided by TALSS and the Library; and

4. investigation and identification of potential departmental and divisional staff/HR implications of all activities, tasks and models proposed (Mylonas & Peacock, 2006).

The Integrated Literacies Project: outcomes

This initiative is based on a demand management model which focuses on utilisation of resources to provide critical services within the bounds of limited resources to ensure that individuals have greater opportunity to choose when and where to seek assistance (McGraw, 2000). It can be described as an experimental high-potential service that Smedlund (2008, p. 868) identifies as that which involves uncertainty and potential risk but which “has the potential to radically increase the performance of both the professional service and its client”.

In Phase 1, the Integrated Literacies Project established a cohesive service and resourcing model by which TALSS and Library staff can collaboratively provide integrated and expanded support for the development of academic literacy and information literacy knowledge, skills, abilities and actions (KSAs). To date, the major outcomes of Phase 1 involve new visioning, consolidated agency and accountability, revised definitions and frameworks, redefined client service models, consolidated resources and promotion, and aggregated quality assurance. It also establishes more coherent processes by which to drive blended curriculum approaches that allow for sequenced, iterative academic and information literacy learning.

1. New vision and accountabilities

Information literacy and academic literacy are now viewed as an ongoing strategic focus for, and functional co-responsibility of, two departments - a partnership which allows for greater scaffolding and more timely support and remediation through frontline, online and consultative services. It signals particularly a fundamental shift in how students at QUT can access individual assistance and resources to assist development of more effective scholarly skills.

The integrating of two established generic discourses has assisted in broadening the purview of academic and information literacy development beyond the Library and TALSS. Arising from the initial stage of the project was the establishment of the University's First Year Academic Literacies Committee (chaired by the FYE Project Director) as a project Reference Group, as well as a greater connection to the student-facing committees and agencies within and beyond the Division, and a significant intersect with a number of key faculty-based teaching and learning projects.

The project has also established the new services and governance processes within the continuous evaluation and review processes of the Division and each department. As the initiative morphs into core business for the Library as well as TALSS, ongoing evaluation strategies will continue to be devised and implemented to ensure ongoing delivery of quality support and timely learning services to students.

2. Definitions & frameworks

Establishing a framework for academic literacy arose from a consultative process of focus groups and discussions involving over 40 staff from the Library and TALSS. From this process a single definition of academic literacy was framed for QUT:

Academic literacy – the knowledge and understanding of strategies and processes, and their appropriate selection and application, that enable students to study effectively and efficiently.

Significantly, the notion of “tertiary literacy” also emerged from the literature and focus group discussions, identifying a strategic framework under which academic literacy and information literacy might co-exist with other sets of literacies (eg. professional literacy, computer literacy, etc), and might be framed as four dimensions to guide graduate capabilities development. A working definition and framework was thus proposed:

Tertiary literacy defines a student's way of 'knowing, doing and being' within the social and cultural academic context of QUT with respect to the attitudes, goals, values and practices of the University. It is that which determines context, self, performance and growth for each QUT student to the maximum extent as:

- *context* - engenders the conventions, discourse and culture of the broader university, the disciplines and the professions;
- *self* - fosters academic identity and socialisation;
- *performance* - supports academic success and achievement; and
- *growth* - develops self-directed, active and intentional learners (Mylonas & Peacock, 2007).

An agreed set of comprehensive academic literacy criteria which are adaptable within the QUT context of faculties and disciplines, ensures a higher level of uniformity and synergy across teaching and learning initiatives.

3. Expanded Help Desk services

From Semester 1 2008, students are directed to seek academic study skills support at all Help Desks at any of the branch libraries. This assistance, provided by *librarians* as well as PAALs, is intended to provide students with more timely personal help so that they can resolve their difficulties quickly and effectively, and connect them to a wider range of learning resources appropriate to their study needs. In instances where more extensive or ongoing support might be required, Help Desk staff refer students to other appropriate support staff or areas, such as Academic Skills Advisors (TALSS), Language and Learning Advisors (International Students Services), Faculty-based peer mentors/advisors, IT Helpdesks, Student Administrative Services, and Counselling Services. The blended service also extends to study and learning support through the Ask-a-Librarian service by phone, email, chat online and SMS. Combining the support across all these aspects ensures that students can access immediate assistance in ways which suit their study schedules, personal circumstances and learning preferences (see Fig. 1).

Operationalisation of point-of-need study skills support at Library service points has demanded significant cross-skilling and co-location of all staff involved - ie: of librarians *and* PAALs. Rather than operating from desks located in various areas of the different branch libraries, PAALs (when rostered) have been brought onto the frontline Help Desks to work with librarians, with the expectation that *all* staff will answer *any* questions asked of them by students presenting at those desks. In this regard, librarians have undertaken a range of staff development activities to ensure they have good knowledge and understanding of the issues, concepts and resolutions concerning study-related problems. For the PAALs, training has involved upskilling them to appropriately assist with basic level reference and information literacy queries. In the case of the Gardens Point branch library, which has recently also implemented an integrated reference/lending services Help Desk, the PAALs' training has also involved resolving basic lending-related issues.

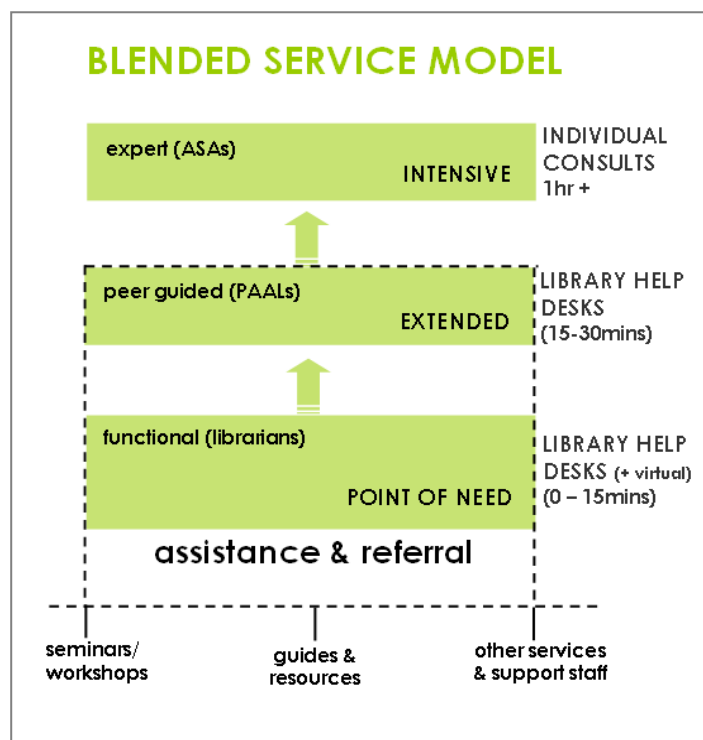


Fig. 1: Blended Help Desk service model

Implementation has also involved (i) agreement on service definitions and staffing levels; (ii) resolution of referral and resourcing parameters; (iii) modifications to physical spaces to better address the services to be provided; and (iv) revised branding and signage. Finally, the process required a renegotiation of the Library's internal policy whereby Library staff with limited or no direct client contact undertook rostered shifts on Help Desks; under the new service model, only staff with academic qualifications (and thus personal academic experience) are required to fulfil rostered shifts.

4. Consolidated portals & resources

Previous to the Integrated Literacies Project, academic and information literacy-related learning tools and resources were departmentally developed, managed, badged and located (physically and virtually). While convenient for the designated content/service managers, the connect for students was neither intuitive nor relational, and students presenting with a particular study need were unable to easily or accurately associate their need with a departmental acronym or service portfolio.

Phase 2 of the project has involved consolidating learning tools and resources where a rational connection might be better made for the students. One significant outcome of this process has been the development of a combined learning services portal called *kickSTART* (<http://www.kickstart.qut.edu.au/>), and a central 1-stop course registration system (*studySMART*).

The image shows a promotional card for 'kickSTART studySMART'. At the top, the text 'kickSTART studySMART' is displayed in white on a dark blue background. Below this is a photograph of a young woman with glasses sitting at a computer workstation, looking thoughtful. Underneath the photo is the QUT logo (Queensland University of Technology) and the text 'Division of Technology, Information and Learning Support'. A blue heading reads 'Improve your study, writing and research skills', followed by a bulleted list of benefits: 'Register online for workshops, tours and seminars', 'Access helpful guides and handouts', 'Learn more with online tutorials and guides', and 'Find people to answer your questions'. At the bottom, the website address 'www.kickstart.qut.edu.au' is provided in red.

Fig. 2: *kickSTART* Q Card

The *kickSTART* portal assimilates the learning services of the Division and presents them in way which has meaning to students and the ways in which they interpret and articulate their particular needs and study requirements. *kickSTART* links students to people, places and products (such as online tutorials and courses, study skills work tools and IT user guides) that can help them develop their skills. While content is still managed and housed at a departmental level, *kickSTART* is departmentally “neutral” at the point of entry where a student needs to make a judgement about a service or resource to use.

Through *studySMART*, students can register for study, research and writing seminars and workshops offered by TILS. With all the “standard” features available (such as auto-emailing, scheduling management, reporting and waitlisting), as a module of Millenium (by Innovative Interfaces), *studySMART* brings the additional functionality and familiarity of the Library catalogue (eg. workshop records are returned as results of catalogue searches, and registered sessions are added to students’ Library profiles).

5. Blended communication & promotional strategies

The Division recognises that successful communication with clients regarding its services is critical to the success of the organisation. Responsibility for coordinating and delivering the Division’s communication and promotional requirements falls to the TILS Communication Team, and it is the work of this team that has been a critical success factor for the Integrated Literacies project and the ongoing effectiveness of individual initiatives.

In support of each aspect of the initiative, the TILS Communications Team produces a promotional strategy and/or communication plan which includes: (i) service brochures for students and staff; (ii) physical and electronic signage for placement across the University and within Library spaces; (iii) targeted communiques to students and faculty teaching staff, as well as promotional service information resources for faculty staff to use; and (iv) information and messages for other QUT support service areas, desks and web pages. These communications plans are strategically “time and target” sensitive in order to appropriately deliver the right message at the best time to the right audience (eg. emails to commencing students regarding workshops in Orientation Week).

As well as governance of communication, the team systematically devises new (or rescopes existing) publications (and/or merchandise) to disseminate cohesive messages about learning support, and coordinates the design, content development and distribution of these artifacts across the Division and the University. For example, staff on Library Help Desks and other student support/service areas at

QUT now use specially designed appointment cards which allow for more direct and managed referral to Academic Skills Advisors. Also, in recognition that students' queries are often complex and diverse, the Communications Team produced a series of 22 highly visual business cards on topics relating to study and research skills that provide a few simple solutions to frequently asked and troubling problems (see Fig. 2), such as using call numbers, managing readings, understanding assignment questions and proofreading essays. Another important publication has been the recent release of an integrated literacies services publication which has been developed to accompany the rollout of *kickSTART* and *studySMART*.

Other teams and individuals have also proven instrumental in promoting the integration of the literacy services. The involvement of the TILS Events Team, which undertakes a centralised coordinating role for TILS' intersection with QUT's student orientation and recruitment activities, has ensured that the project activities develop in step with broader semester-based student commencement activities. Liaison Librarians, the Integrated Literacies Coordinator and senior Divisional managers, through faculty engagement and representation, also assume a pivotal role in connecting students and staff to appropriate learning support information, services and resources.

6. Quality assurance & reporting

TILS maintains a rigorous approach to quality management, using the Balanced Scorecard as a framework for systems and standards that assure the quality of the products and services provided to clients by each department. Likewise, as a multi-departmental initiative, activities relating to integrated literacies fall within the scope and management of divisional continuous improvement processes, such as strategic planning and review, statistical collection and performance measurement, quarterly reporting and benchmarking. Development and standardisation of procedures and processes have been consistently and intentionally applied across the client-facing processes - eg. collection of Help Desk study skills statistics is standardised across the skills sets and across all branch libraries, and reported to the Library's Quality and Planning Manager as per defined timeframes.

7. Into the future: blended models of curriculum development & assessment

The strength of the literacy coalition lies in the shared vision that these learning concepts and skills are most effectively learned when developed and applied recursively and intentionally within the context of a discipline-related learning experience - ie: embedded within curriculum-centred content and authentic assessment for each student. To this end, the integrated literacies model allows for the development, promotion and implementation a variety of strategies and initiatives which target curricula reform, and which incorporate academic and information literacy as enabling capabilities that directly inform and underpin student practice.

Thus, within the University, TALSS and the Library seek to lead and negotiate implementation of a strategic, systemic and sustainable model of integrated literacies teaching and learning focused on:

- raising the awareness of students and staff to the notion of academic and information literacy as lifelong learning attributes and complimentary graduate qualities;
- developing a mutual understanding of the inherent principles and practices of each literacy;
- effecting attitudinal and cultural change pertaining to the learning and teaching of academic and information literacy;
- leading change in learning and teaching practice to ensure that both literacies are a pervasive and enduring part of the learning environment; and
- improving student competence with respect to KSAs relating to scholarship and information.

In support of the goals and objectives relating to this focus, the Library and TALSS will jointly undertake strategic leadership in the development and implementation of initiatives which:

- promote information literacy and academic literacy as key competencies, fundamental to the teaching, learning and research focus of the QUT community;
- enable and empower students as critical and independent users of information by embedding information literacy skills into the whole learning experience;
- enable and empower students as effective and creative scholars and writers by embedding academic literacy skills into the whole learning experience; and
- achieve and promulgate models of effective practice for the implementation and evaluation of these integrated literacies in terms of students' learning outcomes, curriculum structure and assessment (Peacock, 2006).

Integrating literacies: learning lessons

The strategic, collaborative approach to integrating the literacies is repositioning and reaffirming the importance of academic literacy *and* information literacy learning within the University, and will gradually integrate the literacies within an expanding QUT educational agenda which recognises the critical relationship between appropriate learner/learning scaffolding and support systems, effective curriculum design and assessment, and cogent teaching and learning strategies. As Young (2008) suggests, with these educational goals as the cornerstone, bringing academic advising and academic librarianship together ensures greater capacity for developing students academically, professionally and personally.

Aligning the project's goals with QUT's vision and goals relating to graduate capabilities, first year and student experience, and retention/attrition will ensure that the outcomes of the project remain consistent with the strategic and operational directions of the University, drive positive service and curriculum change, raise advocacy and awareness of scholarly capacity building, and produce opportunities for engagement in critical learning and teaching initiatives. It has also promoted a more common understanding of the concepts and approaches required for study, research and learning, affected terminology in faculty and administrative policy and planning, affected strategic whole-of-course design initiatives, and brought the literacy imperative back into the frames of faculty executives and course planners in the University.

Rigorous attention to internal administrative, review and quality processes, such as statistical collection and reporting, knowledge management, evaluation and assessment, reporting and review, and communication and promotion, has provided an infrastructure for, and systems which, support sustainable integrated literacy development (Peacock, 2006). Adherence and response to such requirements as performance measurement and reporting places integrated literacies as a critical focus and responsibility for others beyond the Division, and assures a connectivity and legitimacy which will better assimilate integrated literacies into the overall educational goals and activities of QUT.

Actively extending jurisdiction of integrated literacies has solicited wider engagement in developmental and decision-making processes at a university, divisional and departmental level, and prompted greater common knowledge and understanding of the issues and strategies. Engaging broader group governance in the form of committee planning, implementation and reporting processes has engendered shared responsibility in achieving the strategic goals and objectives of the whole organisation (Peacock, 2006). Finally, joint team building and professional development activities will assure teaching and learning support staff and Library staff continue to lead and share more common practices, language and objectives, and provide opportunities for enhancing the learning and growth of the Division's teaching staff.

As Smeglund (2008) notes, radical innovation forces organisations to draw on new technologies, skills and approaches to solve problems. Committing to this innovation has involved managing a degree of risk in order to provide high-potential services within an acceptable limit of uncertainty for TALSS and Library staff who, in many respects, have excelled at building this bridge as they walked on it (Quinn, 2004). TILS leadership teams, for their part, created a change-ready environment by creating a sense of urgency, encouraging strong coalitions, redirecting human and financial resources, developing and communicating a clear and compelling vision, asking different and challenging questions, systematically addressing strategic and action planning, designing in and valuing early wins, and embedding change in departmental and divisional culture (Covington, 2002). Achieving a sound pragmatic and strategic balance in these processes will continue to bring worthwhile immediate results and assure long-term gains for all concerned, and ensure that the initiative can survive and thrive as redefined core business.

Joining two fundamental literacy portfolios demonstrates the enduring principle that an idea developed and put into action is more valuable than an idea that remains unrealised. Realisation of this idea has and will continue to be a complex process, but it is driven by a strong shared belief that it is a process which offers significant benefit for students, faculty and divisional staff to better provide high quality educational experiences that develop the multiplicity of capabilities within a discipline (Peacock & Bradbury, 2003). Shared commitment and collaboration that links experience, willingness, self-efficacy and self-reflection (Atkinson, 1999) will build a more coherent distributed intelligence around academic

and information literacy learning, and allow for that which Elmborg and Hook (2005) describe as more powerful, dynamic and effective practice brought about by a more mature, coherent institutional partnership between libraries and writing centres.

Ward and Raspa (2000) challenge academic institutions to embrace the “collaborative imperative” in order to explore solutions to new problems, and develop new models which redefine traditional practice. As QUT’s academic skills advisors and librarians continue to re-imagine their role together, and the framework for and the locus of research and writing service and support, they will have a positive impact on the success of broader efforts to introduce and promulgate new models of literacy learning and lead the University to reimagine the development and support of graduate capabilities at QUT.

Conclusion

Albert Einstein recommended that, in any given situation, if the facts don't fit the theory, one should change the facts. QUT, like many other universities, has been reaching a critical impasse in learning support - an impasse arising from a critical mismatch of the facts and theories. Generally held beliefs - that students should be tertiary ready, and that a university education is a shared organisational responsibility - are not entirely supported by the true facts of the matter. Tertiary level students are increasingly struggling with the fundamental scholarly processes that underpin their academic study, learning and success, as is evidenced by greater numbers of students on academic probation and rising attrition. Traditional centre-based models of academic learning support seem less suited to respond to a different imperative that demands more support, more often, for more students in ways which are more appropriate to a wider range of courses and delivery modes.

TILS, as the lead agency in centralised academic support at QUT, has sought to address this impasse by building a new theory - that pandemic reform of learning support is necessary to assure greater student success and that, to do so, demands distributed intelligence, broader divisional and organisational ownership, and greater buy-in from academics, academic-related staff and students. To support the theory, the Division has had cause to then change the facts - that academic and information literacy support is not a singular responsibility but rather requires a consortium with efforts managed departmentally but operationalised collaboratively - that the Library must become a more committed educational enterprise where librarians engage as literacy educators who challenge learners assumptions, encourage learning, set academic standards and mediate between undergraduates and academic discourse (Elmborg, 2006; Dick, 1995). The integrated literacies initiative thus melds new theory with new facts to provide meaningful, student-facing approaches to the provision of enhanced and expanded academic learning support.

For staff in academic libraries and learning support areas that assume a collaborative responsibility in the process, it involves co-developing a strategic vision of how each and both can contribute to the overall learning and teaching goals of the parent institution. It is a responsibility that must drive this vision through long-term commitment and planning of learning support at all levels of the organisation, appropriate resource provision and support for student learning initiatives, creative capacity building within professional teams, and recognition that all gains ultimately contribute to deeper and more durable outcomes and successes for students. At the heart of the responsibility, is a shared duty of care for the student and a mutual respect for the learning that each student experiences.

King Whitney Jr suggested that change is viewed by the fearful as threatening because things may get worse, by the hopeful as encouraging because things may get better, and by the confident as inspiring because the challenge exists to make things better. This integrated literacies approach has been undertaken with the latter as the foremost principle, while all the time being sensitive to the impact of change on people and organisations. It will continue to challenge deeply held professional beliefs, demand patience in the face of entrenched organisational beliefs and practices, and require ongoing commitment and creative dispersment of staff, time and resources. In all aspects, the process has been a catalyst for positive change which offers enormous potential for enduring impact on learning at QUT. At the heart of this promise is a rewarding marriage of two complimentary literacies which, together and separately, assure better learning outcomes, positively affect the student tertiary experience, and ensure capable graduates with capable futures.

References

- Atkinson, S. (1999). Collaboration: that awful "C" word. *The Urban Review*, 31 (2), pp. 173-183.
- Bruce, C. (1997). *The Seven Faces of Information Literacy*. Adelaide: Auslib Press.
- Bruce, C. (2002). *Information literacy as a catalyst for educational change: a background paper*. White paper prepared for UNESCO, the US National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, and the National Forum on Information Literacy for use at the Meeting of Information Literacy Experts, Prague, The Czech Republic, 20-23 September 2003. Available online: <http://www.nclis.gov/libinter/infolitconf&meet/papers/bruce-fullpaper.pdf>
- Bundy, A. (2004a). *Beyond information: the academic library as educational change agent*. Paper presented at the International Bielefeld Conference Germany 3-5 February 2004. Available online: <http://www.library.unisa.edu.au/about/papers/beyond-information.pdf>
- Bundy, A. (Ed.). (2004b). *Australian and New Zealand Information Literacy Framework: principles, standards and practice*. Second edition. Adelaide: Australian and New Zealand Institute for Information Literacy. Available online: <http://www.anziil.org/resources/Info%20lit%202nd%20edition.pdf>
- Catts, R. (2004). "Preface" in Bundy, A. (Ed.). (2004b) *Australian and New Zealand Information Literacy Framework: principles, standards and practice*. Second edition. Adelaide: Australian and New Zealand Institute for Information Literacy. Available online: <http://www.anziil.org/resources/Info%20lit%202nd%20edition.pdf>
- Covington, J. (2002). Eight Steps to Sustainable Change. *Industrial Management*, Nov/Dec 2002, 44 (6), pp. 8-12.
- Dick, A. (1995). Library and Information Science as a Social Science: neutral and normative conceptions". *Library Quarterly*, 65 (2), p. 226.
- Elmborg, J. & Hook, S. (2005). *Centers for Learning: writing centers and libraries in collaboration*. Chicago: ACRL
- Elmborg, J. (2006). Libraries in the Contact Zone: on the creation of educational space. *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, 46 (1) pp. 56-64.
- Ganobcsik-Williams, L. (2006). *Teaching Academic Writing in UK Higher Education: theories, practices and models*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gillespie, D. and Brooks, M. (2001). Mission possible: partnerships for innovation, in Frylinck, John (Ed.), *Partners in learning and research: changing roles for Australian Technology Network Libraries*, Adelaide: University of South Australia.
- Haycock, K. (2007). Collaboration: critical success factors for student learning. *School Libraries Worldwide*, 13, (1), pp. 25-35.
- Isabell, D. (2008). What Happens to Your Research Assignment in the Library? *College Teaching*, 56 (1), pp. 3-6.
- Kuhlthau, C. (2004). *Seeking Meaning: a process approach to library and information services*. Connecticut: Libraries Unlimited.
- Lupton, M. (2004). *The Learning Connection: information literacy and the student experience*. Adelaide: Auslib Press.
- McGraw, E. (2000). A Model for Demand Management in a Managed Care Environment. *Military Medicine*, Apr, 165 (4), pp. 305-308.

Mahaffy, M. (2007). Exploring common ground: US writing center/library collaboration. *New Library World*, 109 (3/4), pp. 173-181.

Mylonas, A. & Peacock, J. (2007). *Integrated Literacies Final Project Plan*. Internal document. QUT: Division of Technology, Information and Learning Support.

NACADA (National Academic Advising Association). (2004). NACADA statement of core values of academic advising. Available online: *NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources* web site: <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Clearinghouse/AdvisingIssues/Core-Values.htm>

Peacock, J. & Bradbury, S. (2003). *Queensland University of Technology & QUT Library's Information Literacy Framework. Submission for the Australian Award for University Teaching 2003: Institutional Award - Category 1: Innovative and practical approach to the provision of support services (on, and/or off campus) that assist the learning of students* [unpublished].

Peacock, J. (2005). Information literacy education in practice in Levy, P. & Roberts, S. (eds) (2005). *Developing the New Learning Environment: The changing role of the academic librarian*. London: Facet Publishing, pp.153-180.

Peacock, J. (2006). THINK Systemically, ACT Strategically: Sustainable development of information literacy in the broader context of students' learning. *Proceedings of IATUL 2006: Embedding Libraries in Learning and Research (CD only)*, 22-25 May, Faculdade de Engenharia Universidade do Porto, Portugal.

Quinn, R. (2004). *Building the Bridge as You Walk on It*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

QUT TILS (2008). *Divisional overview*. Available online: <http://www.tils.qut.edu.au/>

Rader, H. (1999). Faculty-Librarian Collaboration in Building the Curriculum for the Millenium: the US experience. *IFLA Journal* 25 (4), pp 209-213.

Radomski, N. (1999). Framing Information Literacy: Themes, Issues and Future Directions - the University of Ballarat experience, in Bruce, C. & Candy, P. (eds) (1999). *Information literacy around the world: advances in programs and research*. Wagga Wagga, NSW: Centre for Information Studies, Charles Sturt University.

Ryan, Y. (Borderless Education Team). (2001). *Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Capacity of Public Universities to meet Australia's Higher Education Needs*, Submission 33, Volume 3. Available online: http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/eet_ctte/public_uni/submissions/sub033.doc

Sheridan, J. (Ed.). (1995). *Writing-Across-the-Curriculum and the Academic Library: a guide for librarians, instructors, and writing program directors*. Connecticut: Greenwood Press.

Simmon-Welburn, J., Donovan, G. & Bender, L. (2008). Transforming the Library: the case for libraries to end incremental measures and solve problems for the campuses now. *Library Administration & Management, Summer*, 22 (3), pp. 130-134.

Smedlund, A. (2008). Identification and Management of High-Potential Professional Services. *Management Decision*, 46 (6), pp. 864-879.

Vygotsky, L. (1962). *Thought and Language*. Boston: MIT Press.

Ward, D. & Raspa, D. (2000). *The Collaborative Imperative: librarians and faculty working together in the information universe*. Chicago: ACRL.

Young, C. (2008). Incorporating Undergraduate Advising in Teaching Information Literacy: case study for academic librarians as advisors. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 34 (2), pp. 134-144.