

Refining Our Strategy - a University Library response

July 2009

www.library.unimelb.edu.au

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SUMMARY

The Library welcomes this opportunity to contribute to refining the University's long-term strategy, *Growing Esteem*.

This document summarises the feedback offered by more than 30 Library staff and stakeholders during July 2009. A second document, available at www.informationfutures.unimelb.edu.au, provides more detailed commentary on the specific questions posed by the "Refining Our Strategy" consultation paper.

The University Library supports the general direction of the current version of *Growing Esteem*. In particular, we believe the infrastructure questions raised in the discussion paper (section 8.2) are addressed by "Melbourne's Scholarly Information Future: a ten-year strategy." In this response we suggest some ways in which the Library can contribute to differentiating the University from its peers and competitors, and assist the University in achieving its goals.

The engagement and consultation process that shaped the first version of *Growing Esteem* was a welcome innovation for the University of Melbourne. Staff, alumni and other stakeholders gained a sense of ownership and community from the process, and we believe the resulting strategy was more robust than it otherwise might have been. We are pleased that openness, transparency and public engagement continue as watchwords in formulating and implementing the University's long-term strategy.

Coming 12 months after the adoption of "Melbourne's Scholarly Information Future: a ten-year strategy," the current review is an opportune moment to revisit the Library's directions, to test the scholarly information strategy's assumptions and aspirations, and to ensure that the Library plays a key role in helping to implement *Growing Esteem*.

Library spaces and services are undergoing an extensive program of renovation and improvement, placing the Library at the centre of each academic precinct on the Parkville campus. The recently completed Eastern Resource Centre is an early example of how such 'learning precincts' can enhance the Melbourne Experience for undergraduates while continuing to serve the needs of research staff and students.

Library collections and services are essential infrastructure for both Research and Knowledge Transfer, as well as for Learning and Teaching. The Library is a key enabler for all three strands of the triple helix, and provides policy, training and benchmarking for the management of University records and corporate information.

Our Library collections are a highly valuable resource that can be included as part of the University's co-investment when bidding for Government funds. The value of a collection is maintained through its ongoing development.

Within academic disciplines the Library can be seen as a competitive advantage in the University's quest to attract top students, researchers and scholars from around the world. Many of our collections are unique in the world; others have enviable depth in a particular discipline. The professionalism and specialist knowledge of our Library staff is regularly acknowledged in client and stakeholder surveys.

Embedding scholarly literacy, scholarly communication and research experience into the curriculum at both undergraduate and graduate levels will contribute to Graduate Attribute outcomes, helping our students to become more successful scholars, and creating alumni who are able to communicate effectively in a variety of settings, contributing to the University's public profile.

To achieve these goals we need to develop close partnerships between academic and professional (information-specialist) staff, and to invest in further building the professions relating to library and information sciences.

The Library is eager to contribute to the 2011 Project. This will help to ensure scholarly literacy, research data management and other information-related aspects are seamlessly embedded in the new graduate curriculum.

Encouraging and resourcing the archiving and long-term stewardship of the valued research datasets generated by our research communities will provide opportunities for increased global exposure of our research excellence. These initiatives will increase the potential for citations, impact, as well as attracting the best scholars. Library expertise can also help to measure the impact and quality of research outputs.

Appropriate virtual environments for collaboration are critical for research activity and supporting partnerships. Interoperability, standards compliance and ease of use will be important factors in the uptake of new technologies. Providing outstanding environments for communication and collaboration could help to improve research higher degree completion rates.

Virtual Institutes by their very nature will be dynamic and transient entities. It is important that appropriate information and records management systems are in place to ensure the capture and archiving of the corporate memory: the knowledge base about the partnerships and research that they generate. The Library's information management specialists can assist with this.

National and international collaborations, for example our participation in the Australian Data Commons and the Sakai open-source project, will enable the University to gain benefits that it could not afford in isolation.

With the introduction of Responsible Division Management and other recent organisational changes, the University now has an opportunity to develop a position on the governance and management of information itself. The Library's information management specialists are well positioned to take an end-to-end approach to managing all types of University information, from the initial creation of a piece of data, through its analysis and application in decision-making, to its eventual journey into either scheduled destruction or long-term preservation.

Any major change of University strategy - including increased student numbers, multiple campuses or expansion overseas - will require detailed planning and adequate resourcing to ensure the provision of appropriate Library services and facilities.

We remain confident that "Melbourne's Scholarly Information Strategy" is achievable and supports the University's aspirations. We welcome the opportunities that a refined *Growing Esteem* strategy presents, and will continue to work in close partnership with academic staff, students, professional staff, alumni and other stakeholders to achieve the University community's goals.

Philip G Kent
University Librarian

DISCUSSION

Numbers in the right margin refer to the list of questions in the “Refining Our Strategy” discussion paper.

The Melbourne Vision

The engagement and consultation process that shaped the first version of *Growing Esteem* was a welcome innovation for the University of Melbourne. Staff, alumni and other stakeholders gained a sense of ownership and community from the process, and we believe the resulting strategy was more robust than it otherwise might have been. Openness, transparency and public engagement should continue to be watchwords in formulating and implementing the University’s long-term strategy.

As a University we set high aspirations for ourselves. In the day-to-day pressure of deadlines, service delivery and information overload, it is easy for individuals to lose sight of those aspirations. Our local or domain-specific business plans, operational plans, progress reports and individual performance development plans (PDFs) must articulate clearly how they contribute to the broader *Growing Esteem* vision. 2.1

Knowledge Transfer is an expression of the University's aspiration to be a public-spirited university. At a superficial level the two-way nature of Knowledge Transfer is often misunderstood; the word 'transfer' implies one-way communication and allows marketing to be confused with genuine exchanges of expertise and knowledge. 2.2

A term such as 'engagement' or 'knowledge exchange' might better express our intentions. This would better express the reciprocal nature of learning, and combat the misconception that Knowledge Transfer is primarily about either marketing or commercialization of intellectual property.

Specifically-allocated funding or other resourcing is not always necessary in order for Knowledge Transfer activity to occur: the cost of producing and publishing a refereed journal article is a Knowledge Transfer cost as much as it is a Research cost. 2.4

Because of the broadly consultative development and implementation process adopted for *Growing Esteem*, we believe the triple helix metaphor has become deeply embedded in staff members' consciousness. The three strands are well understood, though our experience is that the more abstract role of 'enablers' tends to be less clear. 2.5

A world-class university: resources, size and international strategy

Whether on-shore or off-shore, any significant change in the University's student or staff numbers will have implications for the provision of Library services and facilities. 4.1

The Library is working to improve its services, spaces and collections. Change in this area takes time, as it relies upon cooperation with other student service providers, design and implementation of significant building works, and alterations to staffing profiles and roles.

In several academic disciplines the Library can be seen as a competitive advantage in the University's quest to attract top students, researchers and scholars from around the world. Many collections are unique in the world; others have enviable depth in a particular discipline. The professionalism and specialist knowledge of our Library staff is regularly acknowledged in client satisfaction surveys. 4.2

The challenges of providing Library services for off-shore students are similar to those of providing services to alumni, to regional campuses within Victoria – and to the emerging class of 'mobile workers' in both academic and professional roles, who require access to information resources regardless of location.¹ 4.5

In 2009 two of our regional librarians are undertaking a feasibility study of enhanced support for remote students. The study considers number of individuals requiring the service, geographic location, proximity to other academic libraries, and a projected need for paper-based resources as indicated by discipline.

Freeware communication technologies are being explored to deliver research consultations and skills transfer for regional and off-campus students. There is much interest in the outcome of the business case for the Desktop Communicator project in the University's Unified Communication program.²

It may emerge that a relatively small investment will allow us to meet, in a timely fashion, the paper-based information needs of research students in remote locations or indeed for any of our remote graduate students.

Remote students make few demands on student services and infrastructure. An enhanced Library support service would contribute to quality of experience and may assist in rates of completion for both research and coursework students.

¹ "Melbourne's Scholarly Information future: a ten-year strategy" (2008), page 7

² Information about the Unified Communication project is available at www.uc.unimelb.edu.au. Queensland University of Technology and Griffith University have recently collaborated in a similar Mobile Staff Productivity Project to increase employees' capabilities for productive use of mobile technologies in the workplace.

Research

In relation to scholarly output, usage statistics and bibliometrics can be a valuable input to assessing research impact and excellence. Academic publishers and the various information professions are investing much effort in developing useful tools for this type of measurement. 5.1

As well, internationally there is an emerging body of ethnographic research into the types of information-related behaviors employed in different academic disciplines. This work is starting to inform the design and delivery of academic library services.

Library collections both print and online are a critical component of the research infrastructure required to support our research depth. It is clear that this resource is more critical in some disciplines, for example law and the humanities. Our collections must reflect a broad representation of the global literature. In some areas we have fallen behind other Group of Eight library collections. This is also the case when compared with our international competitors. A funding structure that incorporates Library collection development with other research infrastructure capability development will ensure that these resources are appropriately developed and maintained. 5.3

Specialised collections need to be complemented with specialised librarian skills and resources. We need to ensure that our librarians continue to develop skills in line with emerging technologies and demands from our research communities.

Encouraging and resourcing the archiving and long-term stewardship of the valued research datasets generated by our research communities will provide opportunities for increased global exposure of our research excellence. Information about these datasets, where possible, can be integrated into the Australian Data Commons.³ These initiatives will increase the potential for citations, impact, as well as attracting the best scholars. 5.4

A purpose-built Research and Cultural Library on the Parkville campus will work towards attracting major research partnerships and the best scholars:

"Melbourne will build a new research and cultural library that links the city and the University, creating a magnet for international scholars, particularly in the humanities. Public spaces within the building will invite the community into our scholarship, offering a window on our collections, both physical and digital. For scholars there will be browsable access to research reference works, quiet contemplative study spaces and ready access to our relatively low-use research collections through a rapid retrieval service, with the collections themselves housed in temperature- and humidity-controlled closed-access conditions to ensure their preservation."⁴

³ See Australian National Data Service (ANDS) at ands.org.au

⁴ "Melbourne's Scholarly Information Future: a ten-year strategy" (2008), page 9

Research

Conversely, inadequate coverage of discipline depth and global literature will deter the best scholars from coming to Melbourne.

Our Library collections are a highly valuable resource that can be included as part of the University's co-investment when bidding for Government funds. The value of a collection is maintained through its ongoing development.

Appropriate virtual environments for collaboration are critical for research activity and supporting partnerships. Interoperability, standards compliance and ease of use will be important factors in the uptake of new technologies. Providing outstanding environments for communication and collaboration could help to improve research higher degree completion rates.

In the foreseeable future eResearch will increasingly require higher bandwidth, greater data storage and more internal expertise than the University is currently able to provide. Collaborative partnerships with organisations such as ANDS will help us to develop our own capabilities and leverage the benefits of large-scale national facilities. The University Library has obtained project funding to conduct a number of exemplar projects that will 'seed the data commons' in order to inform national initiatives.

Research is increasingly interdisciplinary, international and collaborative. The move by the University to establish Futures Research Institutes reflects this changing research landscape.

Virtual Institutes by their very nature will be dynamic and transient entities. It is important that appropriate information and records management systems are in place to ensure the capture and archiving of the corporate memory: the knowledge base about the partnerships and research that they generate. The Library's information management specialists can assist with this.

Though the Library is well equipped to reflect the distinct differences in how scholarly information is created and disseminated within academic disciplines, it will only meet these new challenges by ensuring that scholarly information is more readily accessible. This requires an excellent agile and intuitive Library management system and a strategy for ensuring that all our collections are comprehensively catalogued for ease of discovery. An ongoing program for the digitisation of our special and cultural collections as well as collections of research information is also an imperative for increased access and exposure.

5.6

The Infrastructure Challenge

5.10

In 2008 the Information Futures Commission identified two strategies for advancing Melbourne's position as a leading research institution:

- Provide an outstanding information environment
- Disseminate the University's scholarship widely

Research

As indicated earlier, collections provide an important part of research infrastructure. When compared with Group of Eight universities our collections are falling behind in size, quality, breadth of coverage and investment in development and preservation. If the application process and the disbursement of research grant funding recognized the role of Library collections in supporting research, the University's research practices would better reflect the value that our collections bring to the research funding domain. It would also ensure that collections can be extended and developed in alignment with the research activity itself. For instance, other universities allocate some Research Infrastructure Block Grant income to their libraries. This is not the case at Melbourne.

Infrastructure gaps include:

- **Research data management and storage services and support**
The library is building capability and services in this area in partnership with the Research Office, Information Technology Services, and various regional and National initiatives such as VerSI and the Australian National Data Service (ANDS). However, these services are not adequately funded to enable all researchers to comply with our policies and obligations.
- **Collaboration environments**
Researchers need tools and secure virtual environments for their collaborative research. The Library is well placed to continue to play a role through involvement in Sakai and Web 2.0 technologies demonstrating the benefits of these collaboration tools.
- **Open Access Policy**
The Library has championed the merits of embracing a culture of Open Access with the University of Melbourne being one of the first universities in Australia to establish an open ePrints repository. Our "Scholarly Information Strategy" includes an aspiration that, where possible, Melbourne will make its research data, teaching materials, creative works and publications available in open and interactive ways, enriching the University's research and learning, contributing to global knowledge and profiling Melbourne as a leading research university. A cultural value for Open Access will encourage collaboration and help overcome the barriers of competitive secrecy. Establishing a digitisation capacity within the University would contribute to public knowledge by exposing selected collections more widely.

The Library's engagement with the Australian National Data Service will enable more of our research outputs to populate the Australian Data Commons increasing exposure and hence the potential for impact and citations.

Research

Research Training - pursuit of excellence

5.16

“Melbourne’s Scholarly Information Strategy” includes an aspiration that Melbourne be known for the depth of its disciplinary research and its innovative interdisciplinary research, profiled through open access to our scholarly output.

Increased exposure of research output will attract local and international scholars. Our participation with the Australian Data Commons, championed by theLibrary, will facilitate this exposure.

Barriers to attracting better students

Sufficient appropriate spaces for research scholars is lacking in our libraries and across our campuses. In the past our libraries have focused on meeting the demands of undergraduate students. Our stakeholders inform us that there are insufficient quiet work spaces for scholars to think and create.

In some disciplines, such as law, our collections are inadequate for some areas of major interest.

Improved environments for RHD students

Access to quality information, computing, secure data storage, quiet and collaborative spaces is critical for RHD students. Uneven access to these resources across faculties means that some RHD students rely heavily on Library spaces for their scholarly activities. As graduate schools become better established, we anticipate greater consistency in the RHD student experience. The Library will continue to partner with graduate schools to ensure that this common goal is attained.

The Library is working towards fulfilling the “Scholarly Information Strategy” aspiration for an outstanding information environment that makes it easy for scholars to work across disciplinary boundaries, facilitating creativity and the development of critical thought and knowledge.

Approaches to lifting RHD completion rates

Ensure that students receive timely, high-quality Library support. Personalised services by specialised librarians, earlier rather than later in their candidature, will build the support relationship before pressures become overwhelming.

eResearch skills training including data management and use of collaboration tools will help RHD students work smarter and more effectively. Ongoing training in these skills by the Library and the School of Graduate Research should be mandated for all RHD students.

When RHD students do drop out, an exit interview or survey could help the University to understand their reasons for leaving without completion. This intelligence could be used to improve student support, curriculum design or other contributing factors.

Learning and teaching

Traditionally information literacy classes have taught students the mechanical skills of finding and retrieving information: how to use Library catalogues, compile a bibliography, find books in the stacks. 6.1

Today projects at Harvard and MIT are re-conceptualising 'information literacy' and placing more emphasis on the ethics of scholarly communication in a digital world. For example, instead of discussing copyright and compliance they talk about giving credit for others' creative work and receiving credit in return for one's own original work. To address questions of privacy and confidentiality, they foster discussion about online identity and social media.⁵

The accreditation model for some graduate qualifications includes the study of ethics. Embedding 'scholarly literacy' into both the undergraduate and graduate curriculum would provide University of Melbourne students with opportunities to engage with ethical questions that directly relate to their own experiences and to the academic disciplines they choose to pursue.

The Information Futures Commission noted that there is some demand in the University community for services that assist with filtering new information and with organising one's personal collection of information and records. Students as well as researchers said they needed skills in this type of scholarly literacy.

Coherence in the curriculum could be improved by Academic Board actively coordinating the skills development component of study from first year onwards. Feedback from undergraduate students tells us that generic skills (eg using the Library, using Excel and other common software) need to be developed early, before the student undertakes a generic cross-disciplinary subject. Following the model used with success in Economics and Commerce, these generic skills could be embedded into a first-year subject with marks allotted for demonstrating the use of basic skills. 6.5

Integrating some introductory research experience into the undergraduate curriculum would have three potential benefits:

- Students would be better equipped for independent enquiry and problem-solving in the workplace
- Students wishing to pursue an academic career would be more confident in tackling the research requirement
- The University's significant investment in its Library collections (including archives, museum and other cultural collections) would be better utilised

⁵ For a summary of projects led by Henry Jenkins (MIT) and Howard Gardner (Harvard), see the Information Futures blog post at go.unimelb.edu.au/p86

Learning and teaching

To achieve these goals requires a relationship between specialist librarians and academic staff as partners. For example, in a subject that allows the student to choose her own essay topic, the librarian could provide consultation session/s to help identify a suitable topic and Library resources. This may include arranging for selected rare or special items to be digitised specifically for that subject or course.⁶

Interoperability of University systems is critical here, as we want to provide a seamless, rich multimedia environment for study. Other resourcing implications include staff time, forward planning, fragility of special collections, structure and assessment of the essay/subject.

The design of subjects that include research experience, whether breadth or specialist, could be enhanced by seconding a librarian to each faculty's Teaching and Learning Unit for a specified period each year. Faculty staff would benefit from the librarian's whole-of-University perspective, while the librarian would gain valuable insight into that faculty's particular culture and operations.

This partnership-based approach also has implications for development of our scholarly collections. The "Scholarly Information Future" strategy specifically mentions the concept of 'connecting, not collecting' - that is, providing access to externally-held resources rather than purchasing them ourselves. In many cases this is a cost-effective alternative and provides a better end-user experience. However, the Library has been slow to implement this concept in some areas. Similarly, some Library purchases should be made on a 'just in time' basis rather than 'just in case' they might be needed. Improved analysis and reporting of collection usage would help to determine the right mix of purchasing and access strategies for collection development.

The Library is eager to contribute to the 2011 Project. This will help to ensure scholarly literacy, research data management and other information-related aspects are seamlessly embedded in the new graduate curriculum. 6.11

If there are barriers to expanding the University's teaching hours and days, they can be resolved by either reallocating resources or investing in infrastructure that is flexible according to needs. The Library's Learning Environments group already supports Saturday teaching; we expect Sunday teaching to occur in foreseeable future. Some Library branches are open for extended hours at certain times of the year, allowing students to study quietly with minimal supervision and few library services provided. With smart design and technology, newly-renovated Library areas can be made available (via swipe card access) for 24-hour usage. 6.13

⁶ UC Berkeley digitises rare and special items, to preservation quality, specifically for use in undergraduate courses. Professional researchers and graduate students are allowed access to the original objects.

Learning and teaching

Staff, students and visitors regularly comment on the poor condition of many Library spaces and buildings. The Union building, libraries and learning centres require a regular schedule of maintenance and refurbishment work. Heavily-used spaces require cleaning more than once per day.

6.22

Feedback from students over several years⁷ indicates that the Parkville campus lacks sufficient sheltered spaces for individual and collaborative study, socializing, eating lunch or even waiting for lecture theatres to clear between classes. As well, there is little provision on campus for lockable storage of laptop computers and other personal items. Consequently students tend to use libraries as social and study spaces and for group discussion; this in turn leads to a widespread perception among academic staff that our libraries are noisy, crowded and not conducive to scholarly work.

As a matter of principle, we would like to see any renovation or new building work include sheltered and networked interstitial areas that can be utilized by individuals and groups to sit, converse, read, eat or use (and recharge) a portable computer.

The recently-completed Eastern Resource Centre, including the Frank Tate refurbishment, is an early example of how the new precinct-based Parkville campus will operate. This high-quality learning hub combines Library, information technology and student support services relevant to specific cohorts of students. It successfully balances competing demands for group and individual study spaces, undergraduate study and academic research, technology and traditional Library services. We applaud the University's vision for this precinct, and look forward to the Parkville Master Plan being fully realized over the next several years.

Lessons learned from redeveloping the Eastern Resource Centre are already being applied in the planning for renovations to the Brownless Biomedical Library and the landmark Baillieu Library building. Other Library branches are scheduled to relocate or consolidate over the next few years, in order to provide improved access and services to the academic disciplines they support. As each campus precinct takes shape, we are confident the University community will gain increasing benefits from the quality, utility and flexibility of these reimagined spaces.

⁷ For example, in the biennial Library Client Satisfaction survey conducted nationally on behalf of the Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL) by InSync Surveys. Detailed results of the Melbourne survey are available from the University Librarian. For an overview of the national survey, see www.insyncsurveys.com.au/Products/?product=LibrarySurveys

Knowledge transfer

Within the Library we have found the October 2008 "Knowledge Transfer taxonomy" a useful communication tool for improving understanding of the KT concept. Communication about Knowledge Transfer needs to be bottom-up as well as top-down; messages sent via Deans and other senior executives do not necessarily filter through the whole University. 7.1

Communication and internal marketing of Knowledge Transfer could be seen as a tactic to achieve long-term cultural change within University. For now, Knowledge Transfer is a relatively new thing that requires special attention; ten years hence, it should be part of 'business as usual' and only noticeable by its absence.

Knowledge Transfer should include engagement with professional associations and business partnerships. For the Library, this type of Knowledge Transfer is often asynchronous, with benefits sometimes taking years to eventuate; however, we know from past experience that behaving in a socially responsible manner ourselves will inspire other institutions to reciprocate in kind.

A "core aim of knowledge transfer [is] to make the research activities of this University highly valued by our society."⁸ In the scholarly information field, the current level of promotion and resourcing for Knowledge Transfer is not commensurate with the University's ambitions or the expectations of the public: exhibitions, digitisation, cataloguing of archives and special collections all require recurrent operational funding and investment in infrastructure (physical spaces, equipment, bandwidth, staff capability).

Regular maintenance of Library spaces is an example. Similarly, a program of public exhibitions should be supported by the existence of adequate exhibition/gallery space: street frontage, security, lighting and environmental controls, storage and display equipment, and staffing to cover opening hours.

Information literacy has a role in helping to inform and stimulate public conversation about topics of the day. Melbourne's alumni are, in a sense, the living embodiment of the University's public intellectual leadership. In their professions, their social lives and their communities, our graduates' behavior reflects upon the reputation of the University itself. 7.4

The Melbourne Model is designed to equip graduates to become leaders in their communities, to:

- initiate and implement constructive change...
- have excellent interpersonal and decision-making skills...
- engage in meaningful public discourse...⁹

⁸ "Refining Our Strategy" (2009) page 9

⁹ "Learning and Teaching Management Plan" (2007), The University of Melbourne.

Knowledge transfer

One way to prepare graduates for this kind of role is to embed the Knowledge Transfer philosophy into their coursework curriculum, preferably at an early stage of learning.

A successful example was the "Science and Communication" subject in Land and Food Resources. By experiencing first-hand a key part of the scholarly communication cycle, the students gained an understanding of industry structure and stakeholders, an appreciation of the importance of communication, and practical skills in teamwork, communication, planning and organisation.¹⁰ They also had an opportunity to practise information-seeking and retrieval skills in the first year of their academic careers.

Copyright and intellectual property laws are sometimes seen as barriers, or used as excuses for not doing novel things. However, solutions can often be found; for example, a thesis containing copyright images could be published online if the images are removed or blocked from public viewing. 7.6

Selection of appropriate metrics could help clarify the benefit to individual staff - both academic and professional -- of investing the required effort in identifying, documenting and promoting one's Knowledge Transfer activities. Linking Knowledge Transfer to criteria for academic promotions or professional staff development may not be feasible; in lieu, other forms of recognition of individual effort and measurable benefits for departments or groups must be treated seriously. 7.11

It is important to acknowledge that the University's professional staff are involved in Knowledge Transfer. Many are highly qualified and respected in their specialist fields and, as much as alumni or academic staff, they are a public face of the University.

Our students, graduates and staff should be able to communicate effectively with a wide range of audiences; this also contributes to public intellectual leadership (question 7.4). The learning of communication skills should be embedded in the academic curriculum, so that reality matches the rhetoric of graduate attributes, and into professional recognition programs for employees.

Knowledge Transfer could be considered as an internal activity worthy of a stronger focus. For example, we might use Knowledge Transfer-style mechanisms to foster more inter-disciplinary research and collaboration within the University and encourage greater sharing of knowledge across organizational boundaries. 7.12

¹⁰ See the Undergraduate Handbook entry for this subject in 2000: www.unimelb.edu.au/HB/2000/subjects/212-105.html

Knowledge transfer

Such 'internal knowledge transfer' already occurs in many ways, and is exemplified in the breadth subjects in the Melbourne Model. In the future, an effective culture of internal KT could place the University in a strong competitive position, enabling us to make seeding investments in nascent disciplines even before the need to establish a 'virtual institute' becomes apparent.

Supporting our Vision

In considering changes to staff classification structures, we should note the positive effect of changing nomenclature from 'general staff' to 'professional staff' since 2005. It is our perception that this change has helped to eliminate barriers between academic and other staff of the University, and fostered a recognition that the University community benefits from the active engagement of all its members. 8.2

In seeking to change the Library's staffing profile and engender a new class of 'information professional' to work in partnership with researchers and teachers, we have found that the skills and knowledge required in two adjacent HEW levels are often similar enough to cause confusion. Staff have difficulty identifying what they must achieve in order to move from one HEW level to the next. Linking classifications to relevant frameworks, such as the Australian Qualifications Framework, might help to clarify boundaries between levels.

In our consultation for this response, Library staff identified flexibility of work practices, provision of career development pathways, the congenial campus environment and the existence of a genuinely collegial community as potential attractors for new and existing employees. 8.3

It was noted that recognition programs must be conducted openly and with due respect to the individuals involved. Publicity without substance - for example, announcing an annual award and presenting it only once (or not at all) - is prone to feed discontent.

To provide consistency of experience and service across the University, we must ensure that the development of precinct-based Library/learning centres continues at a rapid pace. As well as preventing perceptions of inequity among different student cohorts, this precinct-based approach will enable the Library to consolidate its operations into a smaller number of physical locations. In turn, Library resources can be reallocated into providing longer opening hours and other service improvements long desired by Library users. 8.7

We have identified elsewhere the need for regular maintenance, repair and refurbishment of 'public' spaces on campus such as the Union building and the Library/learning centres.

At present many valuable Library and University collections are stored in substandard conditions, and are therefore at risk of damage or loss. Planning for physical spaces must include adequate storage, security, exhibition and working spaces for the Library's archival, museum, special, research and other physical collections, as well as for the University's 33 Cultural Collections. This will include a mix of off-site storage, open shelving on campus, and high-density storage at the Parkville campus (eg in an automated warehouse facility). 8.8

Supporting our Vision

The Library's Information Management program has expertise in the assessment of information quality and governance, analysis and redesign of business processes and procedures, and best-practice management of most types of organisational information. 8.9

From this professional vantage-point, we observe that the quality and consistency of services and decisions in the University will depend partly on the quality of the information on which those decisions and services are based. Early attempts at activity-based costing of University services have been marked by their use of poor-quality data; consequently, misperceptions have arisen in some minds about the management and effectiveness of some administrative areas.

Business processes and procedures create information. Computer systems are designed to capture, store, retrieve and deliver information. With the introduction of Responsible Division Management and other recent organisational changes, the University now has an opportunity to develop a position on the governance and management of information itself. The Library's information management specialists are well positioned to take an end-to-end approach to managing all types of University information, from the initial creation of a piece of data, through its analysis and application in decision-making, to its eventual journey into either scheduled destruction or long-term preservation.

Any attempt to take a more strategic approach to managing and governing the University's information assets will need to be accompanied by a coherent approach to internal communication. The approach recommended by the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) is based on building close, inter-dependent relationships between the human resources, service design/quality assurance and marketing functions of an organization.

Leveraging of key information assets via a University-wide staff intranet would be a logical first step and, if well managed, could demonstrate immediate time-savings for staff who no longer need to navigate a vast public web site¹¹ to locate contact details for an individual or to find a required policy document. With an effective identity management system in place, and using extant technology such as the Oracle portal product already serving our undergraduate students, the targeted delivery of news, alerts and other information to individual staff could be achieved within 2-3 years.

¹¹ Estimated at more than 2 million publicly-available web pages and thousands of subsites.

METHODOLOGY

The Library undertook a formal process of consultation in order to produce this collaborative response to ‘Refining our Strategy’.

More than 30 staff attended an initial workshop. After hearing from the University Librarian and Library Directors participants formed three groups. These groups considered the more than 70 questions asked by the discussion paper. The groups selected those questions relevant to the Library.

Following this workshop, focus groups met to consider the Library’s response to the relevant questions. The focus groups were organized around the triple helix strands, and an additional workshop was held for stakeholders - academic staff, students and staff from IT Services were invited to attend. Members of the Scholarly Information Advisory Group (SIAG) and Research Infrastructure Advisory Group (RIAG) were invited to participate in the consultation process.

A draft response was circulated for comment and responses were sought via email, blog comments and individual contact.

Acknowledgements

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Unless otherwise noted, the participants are Library staff members.

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Key reference documents

The documents listed below provide background, context and evidence to support this response. Documents produced by the Information Futures Commission in 2008 are available at www.informationfutures.unimelb.edu.au

- *University of Melbourne libraries: 10 year strategic plan*. Dr Kenn Fisher, February 2005
- *Growing Esteem: Choices for the University of Melbourne*: discussion paper, July 2005
- *Growing Esteem: strategy*, December 2005
- *Curriculum Commission Report*, October 2006
- *Report for Council from the Knowledge Transfer Taskforce*, November 2006
- *Final report of the Research and Research Training Taskforce*, January 2007
- *Library of the Future: Vision*. 2007
- *Cultural Strategic Plan 2007-2009*
- *Seventy-six written submissions* to the Information Futures Commission from faculties, departments and individual members of the University, and from external stakeholders, responding to the consultation paper. See also the *12 comments* posted on the Information Futures weblog.
- *Data to Inform Our Decision-Making: trends and benchmarks*. Version 1.0 dated 2 May 2008. Summary of data about IT and library spending, usage of services and collections. Compares Melbourne with Australian and international competitors.



- *Interim report: results of the "Outstanding!" survey.* Version 0.2 (draft) dated 12 June 2008. Describes aspirations of 136 researchers, teachers, students and professional staff about the ideal scholarly information environment.
- *Outputs from exploratory workshops,* April 2008. Six sessions held with students and staff, identifying goals and planning principles related to the triple helix.
- *Information Futures Forum 2008 series:* video recordings of lectures by internal, national and international experts.
- *Presentations by major vendors* including Apple, Blackwell, Sun, Cisco. Video recordings.
- *Student-Staff Consultation Forums:* notes and video recordings of three open forums held in April, May and June.