

**RESPONSE OF THE FACULTY OF ARTS LIBRARY USERS COMMITTEE TO
THE INFORMATION FUTURES COMMISSION CONSULTATION PAPER,
*SCHOLARLY INFORMATION IN A DIGITAL AGE***

Background and general comments

This response has been formulated by the Faculty of Arts Library Users Committee as chaired by Dr Christopher Marshall (Art History @ School of Culture and Communications) and with additional input regarding ICT issues provided by Professor Sean Cubitt (Media and Communications).

The Arts Faculty Library Users Committee welcomes this opportunity to respond to the issues raised by the *Scholarly Information in a Digital Age* discussion paper. We wish to endorse and encourage the vital work carried out by the Information Futures Commission thus far. We share with the Commission the strong belief that the discussion that it has opened up cuts to the very heart of the future success of the research, teaching and knowledge transfer activities of the University of Melbourne. Put simply, the University of Melbourne cannot hope to remain at the forefront of these endeavours if it does not also maintain a core commitment to developing a well resourced and continuously responsive Library system and Information Communication Technologies operational framework.

We also recognize the great diversity of needs that exists in these areas across the University's many different constituencies. Across this vast breadth of experience and specialisation it will be natural that some Faculties (and even different areas within Faculties) may place a predominant emphasis on receiving up to the moment research/teaching materials delivered in digital format. These scholars and students may also not feel a great urgency regarding a need for strong ongoing infrastructure development in the physical provision of Libraries and their all-important support staff. But this perspective does not reflect the full University experience and it certainly does not meet the needs and interests of the Faculty of Arts. **The staff and students of the Faculty of Arts need daily access to the latest developments in digital information delivery for both teaching and research. At the same time, though, they also need to continue to engage equally deeply with current and archival print materials published across a vast range of specialist areas.** Our first major point of response, then, is to note that **a recognition of this diversity in University Library requirements is fundamental to the success of any assessment of future University Library and ICT needs.** We do not feel that the discussion paper as currently framed gives sufficient recognition to this diversity. Instead, and as discussed below, we feel strongly that *Scholarly Information in a Digital Age* **over-emphasizes the importance of digital formats over the continued need to adequately resource printed publications.**

We accordingly wish to re-introduce an emphasis on the physicality of books and an attendant sense of the urgency of the need for bricks and mortar Library development to provide for the future needs of the University. Before doing so,

however, we would like to make the following comments regarding the ICT needs of the University with particular reference to the Faculty of Arts.

Permanent Evolution

The revaluation of the information collection, collation, generation and dissemination processes in 2008 is very welcome. It needs to continue. The defining feature of the future is that it will be different from the present. The early 80s saw the early adopted phase of mobile telephony; the early 90s of the world wide web; the early 2000s of their integration. We should expect by 2015 a new technology of this magnitude. But if we knew what it would be, we would be on our way to being billionaires. Bio, nano, or some other principle lurking in the wings. Smaller but substantial technical innovations occur on average every 8 months at present, mainly in the upstream field of media production, but some, like Wii, in the consumer end. We should expect augmented reality, voice-recognition, smart paper or some other significant interface changes within the same time frame. **To some extent we can plan for the unexpected, but the more we plan, the less adaptable we will be. Maintaining a permanent think-tank and an open, public debate on information and communication futures should be integral to the future life of the University.**

Monopolies and proprietary software

Wherever possible the University should avoid becoming dependent on proprietary software. Solutions for databasing, online learning environments, documents, spreadsheets, forms, data management, searching and so forth should on principle never be tied to a single supplier. The lock-in effect produces lazy service and decay of the environment, as has happened with Exchange, with GAMS, with Themis, and indeed with the Microsoft templates used in the "Faculty Framework" document to which this is a response. Open source offerings such as moodle offer inestimable peer-to-peer support, and save millions of dollars. Transition to Open Source will in the nature of things be slow, but it will be even slower if we never start.

Decentralization

There are few one-size-fits-all solutions. Many academics want control over their online offerings; many maintain blogs and websites for their work off-campus. **Fostering the capacity for academics and other researchers to publish outward-facing as well as protected materials removes the necessity to attempt a centralizing movement at a time when all the trends in telecommunications are in the opposite direction.** Certainly there are economies of scale, and many Arts researchers will prefer a default one-click solution.

This is even more important for student experience: they already spend a large proportion of their lives 'in public': we should be helping them become professionals and citizens of their networked world, by providing advanced tools for creating and publishing rich content. Though the wifi campus tends towards decentred nomadism, socialization, professionalism and citizenship can be enhanced through the provision of either hubs or a network of resource spaces

offering access to and skills in information design and in multimedia generation, recording and editing.

Increased centralisation has as a normal effect increased standardisation. This is against the principle that network communication and online environments should encourage both specialisation and innovation. An optimal solution might include a) maintaining and strengthening the multi-tasking LITES provision at School level while also b) providing platform (Mac, Linux) or program-specific (GIS, CAD/CAM) support from faculty-level providers equivalent to Arts IT and c) rapid-response support on central services like Themis, Exchange and LMS from a University-level centre. In each instance, a service agreement model that is clearly understood by both users and providers is an essential ingredient. Such agreements might include maximum response times, numbers of calls to be responded to, and targets to be met in service provision. **Service-level agreements allow IT providers to plan their staff time, and to time-budget for new developments on that basis.** Such agreements have also been demonstrated to encourage providers to offer and users to engage in skill-development. Where staff have opted to increase their skills and to use them to help colleagues, workload models might reflect the use of general and academic staff expertise in resolving day-to-day problems.

Open Access Repositories

The recent adoption by the Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences of a default open access position is a more public symptom of a move that has been underway for some years towards open access publishing. The Harvard initiative is linked to the Directory of Open Access repositories, which counts among its alliance ARC, NHMRC and the UK Research Councils as well as three Australian universities. One important factor here is the development of fully interoperable databases, so that the Melbourne repository not only matches with other DOAR institutions but with existing major discipline-specific public repositories. A second, crucial factor here is the agreement of publishers, which has to be sought laboriously on a paper-by-paper basis, and is most commonly bound by an obligation to reproduce not the pages as published but the pre-press final edit, in which form the paper does not give page breaks, and therefore is difficult to reference. Of course, academics can write in the page breaks as text, but this is again additional labor. An option for the University is to put pressure on publishers to allow authors to publish PDFs. A handful of journals offer Creative Commons licenses for such repository uses. **No single university has the economic muscle to move these negotiations forward: this is a matter for the G08 or Universities Australia, in which the University should take a lead role.**

Open Access Journals

Two recent developments are of special interest to the Faculty. One is the announcement of the Open Humanities Press, a body of leading international scholars that validates online journals. In the initial announcement, seven journals

are quality-assured by the board. The second is the joint announcement of the Directory of Open Access Journals and the European Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition of the 'seal' system covering copyright, data-mining and metadata compliance among open-access journals. The Budapest Open Access Initiative and some key reports, such as the European Commission's report, *Study of the economic and technical evolution of the scientific publications markets in Europe*, indicate that there is a strong trend towards a mixed economy of commercial hardcopy/e-journals and an open-access sector for both databases of research findings and resources and for published papers and reports. While this movement is stronger in some areas (politics, social science, media) than in others, **it is likely that the constraints of a publishing market whose prices, according to the EC report, have risen at two to three hundred per cent above inflation for two decades, will lead to an increase in open-access solutions.**

Open Access Monographs

In addition, anecdotal evidence from US publishers indicates that online offering of books in PDF or XML format leads to greater sales. Several influential works have been co-published by University Presses and their authors under Creative Commons agreements. There is a move within the Open Humanities Press to establish a validation process for online monographs, an increasingly pressing case, where publishers are decreasingly interested in research monographs. The economic models have yet to be worked out. To some extent the ethic of the peer-to-peer economy works well in this area (in return for refereeing this text, you get access to it and to many others). But other aspects such as copy-editing and design need to be paid in the cash economy. Options that might be explored might be 1) including online publication costs in ARC and other competitive grant application budgets 2) developing a national or international alliance of research institutions to cover the organizational and production costs of the Open Humanities Press and such other organizations as may arise to broker quality-assured publishing in the open-access environment.

Peculiarities of the Arts

There is no agreement among Arts researchers (or even among social scientists) as to which are the A-grade journals. International journals may not be appropriate for Australian or local studies; and specialist journals proliferate in sub-disciplines. The assessment of journals (and of publishers) differs between researchers, as discovered during the RQF process. Citation indexes are rarely used outside certain sub-disciplines. Journal reputations more frequently rise and fall than is the case in the sciences. New themes and problematics are common (new technologies for example, but also historical revisions of the role of women, colonized and indigenous peoples). **Some academics are committed to open access, but are constrained by the lack of recognition for open access in DEST and RQF rankings.** In relation to open access repositories, open access journals and open access monographs, **the future of research dissemination for both quality assurance and for knowledge transfer will require a process of educating the**

research councils, DEST and other bodies concerned with establishing metrics for publications. This again cannot be achieved by a single institution, but the University of Melbourne could have a lead role in negotiating new recognition factors for the increasingly likely future of electronic-only publishing.

Space Issues in the Baillieu Library

The growth of online publishing and the need to develop constantly evolving ICT initiatives does not cancel out the continued importance of printed materials and the importance of the Library as a physical resource. Put simply: digital resources and online databases are not going to replace print volumes and the Library buildings that are created for them. **The way forward, therefore, is not to adopt an either/or policy of emphasis – either digital or print media – but rather to continue to make adequate provision for both kinds of information resources. The Faculty of Arts needs full recognition of both these areas to occur in tandem.**

This much being said, **it has been very clear for many years now that the provision for printed materials in the library system is chronically overburdened and under-resourced.** The ability of the Baillieu Library to house printed volumes has been systematically cut into over recent years by successive incursions into its spaces traditionally reserved for print materials: by the taking away of shelving space to make room for the Percy Baxter Learning Center in 2005, for example, and by the taking away of much of the ground floor of the Baillieu by the relocation of the University Bookroom in 2006. Print purchases have continued all the while and there has been less and less space for housing them as a result. **As a result, the Baillieu Library is in the middle of what can only be described as a state of crisis. It is currently running at 118% capacity. There is a huge backlog of compacted space issues and nowhere near the capacity to house the 15,000 new print items that are purchased for the Baillieu Library every year.** This means that new book purchases cannot be placed on shelves until other recently acquired books are removed and taken to offsite storage to take their place. It also creates havoc with the basic Library services of sourcing and shelving books. It is a fact that students and academics currently have to look in up to three areas to find books: the original Dewey shelves where the books are meant to be, the overflow stacks, for books which can't be placed on the shelves for want of space, and the additional shelves and trolleys for materials awaiting shelving once space can be found. This is not a policy consonant with the University's commitment to remain positioned as one of the world's leading institutions for teaching and research through the implementation of its new triple Helix Melbourne Model.

In order to deal with this crisis, Library staff and academics are currently beginning the painful process of identifying the 80,000 books that will have to be removed from the Baillieu Library in order to make space for new books and to bring the Baillieu Library back to 'normal' capacity. This threatens to create a repeat of last year's ERC Research Collections protest crisis (as further mentioned below), and needs to be addressed directly and as a matter of urgency by the Information Futures Commission. The *Scholarly Information* paper mentions CARM (p. 19) as a possible solution to this crisis. But CARM (and other offsite storage spaces, such as Dawson Street Brunswick) will not solve all our problems since they are not adequate in themselves to house all these items now and in the future to proper storage and conservation requirements (this is the case for Dawson

Street, for example), and there will always be, in any event, other competing requirements for offsite storage (including, besides the Library, Archives and the Ian Potter Museum). And CARM too is problematic for a number of reasons – not least of which is that the University cedes ownership of an item once it is relocated to CARM, which also has a policy of only retaining one copy of each item. So, what would happen under this scenario, for example, if a book becomes re-evaluated as being of high use and needed for reintegration into the Library system in the future (for example if it is to be placed on Reserve)? Once in the CARM system, this is no longer an option since the book may now be requested by other Universities with equal ownership rights to ours.

Space Issues in the ERC, with particular reference to the ongoing issue of the need to adequately house and maintain the Research Collections into the future

The Education Resource Centre continues to feel an even greater sense of the pressures of chronic and ongoing problems caused by a decades' old legacy of inadequate space and resourcing. The Information Futures Commission will surely remember the high profile public relations issues caused by the widespread opposition to the threat to the Research Collections created as a result of its redevelopment into the Eastern Learning Center. **The increased student services and IT support centres (the Student Lounge and 24/7 Student computing centre) currently being built for opening in second semester this year has taken a large area of floor space out of the ERC that would otherwise have been reserved for the Research Collection. 60,000 of the ERC's 300,000 volume capacity has been taken away as a result of this redevelopment.** Library staff and academic staff are accordingly currently going through the painful process of relocating all of these ERC research volumes and identifying which items from the Research Collections will need to be moved offsite to make space for the total collection pool once the redeveloped ERC is opened.

A further additional burden on this space has been created by the closure of the Engineering Branch Library, which has had its collections transferred also to the ERC. A short-term partial solution to this problem was to relocate the Engineering Library collection to the Old Arts Quad Building, together with a small proportion of key research volumes from the existing Research Collections in the ERC. But this space is now needed for other purposes and these books will have to be returned in the middle of this year to the ERC, where there is not the space to house them. The *Scholarly Information* discussion paper notes that "An appropriate balance is needed between browsable collections, collaborative spaces and individual spaces in the Melbourne library of the future to support all three strands [of the helix]. It is not a case of one of these needs at the expense of others." We wholeheartedly endorse this recommendation but note that it is currently certainly not being achieved in the University library system at present. This is particularly the case in the ERC as a result of pressures placed on the Research Collections.

Cultural and Special Collections

The University Library is responsible for maintaining an extremely rich and diverse group of cultural and special collections. To mention just a few, these include outstanding collections of Australian and international rare books which are of national importance; the Print Collection, the unique holdings of the University Archives which preserve the records of business and the labour movement; the Map Collection; rare collections within the Louise Hansen-Dyer Music Library and the outstanding holdings of the Grainger Museum.

Scholarly Information gives appropriate recognition to the significance of the Cultural and Special collections (p. 16). However, we feel that it is surely revealing that the discussion paper then goes on to mention only the need to digitally catalogue these collections. It omits any consideration of the yet more fundamental need to house these collections properly, conserve them, exhibit them and otherwise engage with them more deeply than just through a catalogue entry. Of course, these collections should be catalogued. In fact, much more should be done with them than that. They should also be properly digitised so that they can be inputted into informative and creative online databases consistent with best practice international museum standards (such as the online database of the National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, to give one example). But at the same time they should also be cared for in terms of their housing and other requirements. Almost all of these collections are housed under less than adequate conditions. **Special collections materials that are housed in the Baillieu Library are currently exposed to an air conditioning system that permits unacceptably high humidity levels. There is extremely limited space for the storage of these collections and often appropriate conservation standards for their storage are simply not being met.**

The need for a new building project aimed at designing a new centre for the Library's Cultural and Research Collections

It is for this reason, that **we would like to make one final suggestion concerning the need to bring the Cultural and Special Collections together with the Research Collections into a single, new entity.** There is a pressing need for a newly commissioned building to stand as an iconic architectural statement highlighting and ensuring adequate provision for this priceless cultural legacy, a legacy that could moreover play an increasingly important role in the processes of knowledge transfer and in marketing the University to a wider and increasingly international audience. This could be usefully combined with new and increased holdings for the Research Collections to create a combined new Cultural and Research Collections Center.

This new building needs, moreover, to be adequately resourced with the appointment of new specialist library and curatorial staff to maintain and develop the collections properly once a building has been found to house them. Clearly this will represent a major infrastructure commitment and philanthropic support for a venture of this kind should (one hopes) be being sought at this very moment as a matter of the highest priority. The Baillieu Library's 50 year

anniversary will occur in 2009 and this would constitute a perfect opportunity for fund-raising and sponsorship drives along these lines.

In conclusion, then, the Faculty of Arts Library Users Committee wishes to reiterate its endorsement of the central importance of the issues that the Information Futures Commission has placed on the agenda. The IFC has instituted a process that has brought us to a historic moment of collective consideration and decision-making regarding the kind of Library and Information Communications Framework that we want to see at the University in the years to come. In effect, the Faculty of Arts Library Users Committee is arguing in this response that **we need the best of both worlds. We need both comprehensive and responsive ICT resourcing - with all that this entails in terms of digital databases, online publishing, LMS teaching provision, etc. - together with a continuation of our long-standing core commitment to a deep and sustained engagement with printed materials and with Libraries as fundamental physical resources.** Both of these avenues need to be developed simultaneously, and with equal emphasis, in order to bring us closer to a future reality that really does match all our current aspirations in these areas.