LIBRARY RESEARCH SUPPORT

FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

Report

1. Background

The Library Research Support Survey carried out at the end of 2008, presented the first opportunity for the Charles Darwin University (CDU) Library to gauge the success of services provided to researchers since the establishment of the Research Services Coordinator position in 2007. The survey findings revealed that overall the Library was on track with the services it was providing; however a few areas were identified as needing further attention.

2. The Focus Groups

As a follow up to the Survey, a series of focus group meetings were convened between December 2009 and February 2010 to gain further insight into the feedback provided in the survey. The meetings would further allow small groups of researchers to meet Library staff, ask questions of them, as well as respond to a list of set questions relating to Library services.

Based on the highest number of respondents to the survey by school, the following were selected for focus group meetings: Menzies School of Health Research (MSHR); School for Environmental Research (SER); School of Environmental and Life Sciences (SELS); and School for Social and Policy Research (SSPR).

The hour-long meetings were moderated by Anne Wilson, Associate Director, Client Services (ADCS) who has overall responsibility for the Library’s Research Services, but who is not involved with the research community on a day-to-day basis. Anne worked through a list of prepared questions for each group within the following broad categories: Services in General, Resources, Budget, Interlibrary Loans Workshops and Online support. Also present were Anthony Hornby, Associate Director, Resources and Technology (ADRT) who was able to provide valuable input on Library resources and the resources budget; Jayshree Mamtora, Research Services Coordinator (RSC); and the respective Liaison Librarian (LL) for the School (Margaret Purnell, MSHR; Bernadette Royal, SER and SELS; James Duncan, SSPR).

The focus group meetings were promoted through the research lists and the individual research school mailing lists.
3. Findings

At each of the four focus group meetings, researchers were given the opportunity to give feedback on services provided by the Library. The number of participants in each meeting by School was: MSHR – 9; School for Environmental Research – 8; School for Social and Policy Research – 8; SELS – 4. A summary of responses is presented below, as well as the Library’s response and a list of actions to be taken, where appropriate.

3.1 Services in general

Members of all four focus groups were familiar with the Library’s services. The responses ranged from ‘All fine’ and ‘All familiar with the Library’s services’ to specific, individual comments. Among the individual comments was a request to provide as many resources as possible online, and that when support was needed the researcher was referred to relevant Library staff. A SER research student complimented the Library on its services saying that she had seen a dramatic change in Library services provided in the six years since she first joined CDU as an undergraduate. Menzies staff appreciated the presentations done by Library staff at their new staff induction as it provided an opportunity to identify Library contacts early on.

3.1.1 Response by Library: the Library is currently developing a series of online workshops.

3.1.2 Actions

3.1.2.1 The online workshops are now available and RSC is promoting them to researchers.

3.2 Information-seeking behaviour

Members of three groups provided an insight into their information-seeking behaviour. On being asked how participants went about locating relevant resources, the majority appeared to have established a pattern depending on their needs. Some started the search process with either Google or Google Scholar; others with Library catalogues, the Australian Libraries Gateway or CrossSearcher followed by individual databases or Interlibrary Loan requests.

3.2.1 Response by Library: the series of workshops currently being offered by the Library help researchers become more effective searchers of information, and those uncertain about where to start searching are urged to attend them.

3.2.2 Actions

3.2.2.1 RSC to continue promoting the workshops widely and encourage researchers to attend.

3.3 Resources

All four focus groups provided feedback on resources, clearly an area of major concern. The majority of researchers appeared not to have a great need for hard copy materials although Menzies researchers agreed that an allocation for library resources would be useful. Moreover they expressed a need for better online resources in medicine and the health sciences. There was a
suggestion that researchers when submitting grant applications include a line item for library resources, but it has since been established that purchasing materials is considered the responsibility of the Library and would not be approved by research funding bodies. Researchers from SELS and SER also agreed that they did not have much need for print resources although one researcher said she still liked using hard copy materials as it allowed ‘browsing and serendipity’. Researchers from SSPR indicated their needs were different to those of researchers in the sciences; they considered it important that the Library hold classics in social theory for example, titles that may not have a high usage but nevertheless needed to be available for consultation.

SER and SELS researchers agreed that while the scope of research has increased dramatically at CDU in recent years, that the infrastructure has not kept up to support it. Specifically the growth in research activity has not been matched by an increase in the Library’s resources allocation. Furthermore the Vice Chancellor is developing partnerships with a number of universities in Indonesia. Thus far the Library has been very supportive of visiting scholars from Indonesia but long-term resourcing could become an issue. A SELS research staff member agreed to raise the resourcing issue with the SELS Head of School. As CDU continues to grow, and is currently one of the top five research performers in Australia, this is an issue that needs to be addressed urgently. A SER research member of staff also pointed out that CDU research output needs to be accessible through the Library as some publications are unique.

A SSPR staff member queried the process for ordering materials for the Library collection.

**3.3.1 Response by Library:** the Library is aware that its resources allocation has not kept pace with either increases in cost or the growth of research being carried out at CDU. Annually the Library submits an increase in budget in line with inflation to cover base costs but it is never approved. The CDU processes designed to allow the Library budget to respond to changing internal business are not yet effective. The Library almost never receives funds for resources to support new or re-accredited courses when they are identified through the appropriate Course Accreditation and Re-accreditation Process (CARP). The Library does not receive a regular allocation to support new or changed research activity from Sustainable Research Excellence (SRE) funds. Occasionally the Library has received funds to support specific research resources, the most recent case being part funding of a subscription to the Scopus database. However Library management has since met with the Vice Chancellor, and he has supported the Library’s access to SRE funds, as well as resources to fund newly accredited courses identified in CARP.

The Library budget has not changed with inflation or the changing nature of university business for over 10 years; it has been increased only to purchase a few specific resources packages. During this time the average increase in resource costs was 6% a year and this combined with an ever increasing demand for breadth and depth in electronic journals is causing significant problems:

- The Library is forced to invest in larger volume deals to get deep discounts. In many of these deals the Library has little control over the exact content mix. The flexibility to be able to respond to the changing needs of CDU research is sacrificed in order to provide the minimum coverage of various topics. Vendors price their products to make smaller targeted bundles of resources uncompetitive and lock-in customers.
The CDU distance and online cohort is growing and currently there is limited capacity to provide access to textbooks and other resources online. Over 90% of all books the Library provides access to are print.

Spending on books has dropped to the lowest of any Australian university Library. The Library’s nearest competitor spends approximately double what is spent at CDU.

### Council of Australian University Libraries (CAUL) non-serials (books, DVDs etc) expenditure 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Expenditure: Non-serials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>La Trobe University</td>
<td>$2,594,304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Griffith University</td>
<td>$1,797,742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Median</td>
<td>$1,403,531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Flinders University of South Australia</td>
<td>$1,327,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>University of Newcastle</td>
<td>$1,171,273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>James Cook University</td>
<td>$979,099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Murdoch University</td>
<td>$807,689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>University of the Sunshine Coast</td>
<td>$674,375</td>
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<td>41</td>
<td>Central Queensland University</td>
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<td>42</td>
<td>University of Canberra</td>
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<td>44</td>
<td>University of Ballarat</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>University of Notre Dame</td>
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<td>46</td>
<td>Southern Cross University</td>
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<td>47</td>
<td>ADFA</td>
<td>$290,952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49 (last)</td>
<td>Charles Darwin University</td>
<td>$129,923</td>
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</table>

Note: this list was generated from [http://statistics.caul.edu.au/ranked_lists.php](http://statistics.caul.edu.au/ranked_lists.php). It has been edited to show only Innovative Research Universities Australia (IRUA) members and comparable small regional universities. CDU is a member of IRUA.

The Library has a strong policy of purchasing electronic resources wherever possible and is happy to report that over 95% of active journals provided are now available online making it particularly useful for off-campus students. Last year the Library received a one-off grant of $50,000 for eBooks, and this is a great start, however the Library is still a long way from meeting needs. It has been proven that there is a strong correlation between the quality of research and the quality of resources available. The Library will continue to work with the CDU scholarly community to raise the visibility of this issue and can provide evidence-based costing by number of students as part of a proposal to the Vice Chancellor.

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1 E-journals, their use, value and impact, [http://www.rin.ac.uk/system/files/attachments/E-journals-report.pdf](http://www.rin.ac.uk/system/files/attachments/E-journals-report.pdf)
Comparative expenditure by Equivalent Full Time Student Units (EFTSU) can be seen from the following table for IRUA:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Expenditure: E-Resources/EFTSU</th>
<th>Expenditure: Non-Serials(books)/EFTSU</th>
<th>Expenditure: Print Serials/EFTSU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charles Darwin University</td>
<td>$136.24</td>
<td>$18.28</td>
<td>$22.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flinders University</td>
<td>$260.20</td>
<td>$114.18</td>
<td>$22.54</td>
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<tr>
<td>Griffith University</td>
<td>$172.51</td>
<td>$64.80</td>
<td>$2.28</td>
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<td>James Cook University</td>
<td>$241.61</td>
<td>$83.24</td>
<td>$12.48</td>
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<td>La Trobe University</td>
<td>$195.98</td>
<td>$101.42</td>
<td>$10.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murdoch University</td>
<td>$257.53</td>
<td>$68.65</td>
<td>No Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Newcastle</td>
<td>$241.44</td>
<td>$58.40</td>
<td>$46.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Theses and HERDC publications are in the process of being uploaded into CDU eSpace, the University’s institutional repository. Researchers will soon be encouraged to self-deposit other research papers into CDU eSpace. These items will be discoverable via Google Scholar, Australian Research Online and Australian Digital Theses interfaces in late 2010.

3.3.2 Actions

3.3.2.1 All relevant Library staff to continue canvassing academic and research staff for their support to alert University management to the dire circumstances of the resources budget and its implications.

3.3.2.2 Director, Library and Information Access (DLIA), to discuss access to SRE funding with Director of Office of Research and Innovation.

3.3.2.3 Library staff to ensure researchers are familiar with the process of ordering materials.

3.3.2.4 Library to continue adding CDU research publications to the CDU eSpace repository to make them more widely accessible.

3.4 Access to Resources

There was mixed response toward the CrossSearcher meta searching tool available for searching the Library’s databases. It was evident that all researchers were familiar with the tool and had used it at some point or were continuing to use it. While one researcher in SELS considered it a great tool to start searching for resources in databases, others in SER and at Menzies found it cumbersome to use.

Another issue raised by Menzies was the difficulties experienced in making material available through e-reserve. A one-stop shop process was suggested where in the instance an item was not available in the Library, staff in e-reserve automatically request it via ILL rather than send it back to the requester and prolong the process. Menzies staff also requested that more accessible links to resources be available through Learnline.

A researcher queried the use of the last four digits of primary phone numbers as a PIN number to access personal records in the Horizon library system.
3.4.1 Response by Library: The Library has identified a number of issues from staff and clients with CrossSearcher and will be replacing it with a new tool in 2011. Researchers will be involved in testing. Priorities for selection of the new tool include usability, coverage and data quality.

The Library PIN can be reset to any four digit number. Please contact the Library for assistance to change your PIN. In 2011 the Library will introduce a new Library System that should allow logging in with the standard CDU allocated computer account.

3.4.2 Actions:

3.4.2.1 The Library is in the process of reviewing other meta searching tools.

3.4.2.2 ADRT will follow up with Digital Collections staff to streamline the process for making materials available on e-reserve. CDU Library is investigating ILL management systems and intends to implement a solution in 2011.

3.4.2.3 ADRT to ask the Flexible Delivery Manager to enable Library staff access to manage e-reserve item links in Blackboard.

3.5 Interlibrary Loans

All research groups indicated that their staff are familiar with the Interlibrary Loans (ILL) process and that it was a very good service. It was particularly useful in helping fill the gap when particular resources were not available through the Library. A SSPR member of staff commented that although the service was good, the ILL form was cumbersome to use. Menzies staff currently have difficulty in accessing the ILL form as they are on a different IT system.

An issue of concern brought up by SER was the long turnaround time with obtaining hard copy materials on ILL. In the past an email explaining the reasons for the delay was sent by ILL staff but in this case although the request was resubmitted, no acknowledgement or explanation was received.

3.5.1. Response by Library: In part, the turnaround time for hard copy materials is beyond the control of the Library as it is dependent on the institution from which the loan is being made as well as the postal service. The Library accepts that the forms need review and access for Menzies staff needs to be improved.

3.5.2 Actions

3.5.2.1 ADRT is working with the ILL team to define turnaround time, and keeping clients informed.

3.5.2.2 ADRT has reviewed the online ILL form and implemented the recommended changes.

3.5.2.3 ADRT has obtained a file of Menzies staff names and created individual access for each staff member. The core issue remains though: to put in place a process central process for managing authentication for Menzies staff to all CDU services they are entitled to. The Library is currently pursuing this with ITMS (Information Technology Management Support).
3.6 Workshops

All four focus groups provided feedback on the range and content of workshops available. Members of each group stated that the current range of workshops was good, and that they provided an opportunity for a researcher to acquire skills quickly, and in a short space of time. Suggestions for additional workshops by researchers from SELS, SER and SSPR included: EndNote Web and exporting from Microsoft Excel to EndNote; Multidisciplinary research resources for scientists; Presentation skills and Writing skills.

Menzies staff requested Learnline workshops, and workshops on Setting up alerts in health databases. They again, noted the difficulties experienced with accessing CDU online forms, this time with the booking form for workshops.

3.6.1 Response by Library: Further workshops will be planned by the Library, and that Presentation skills and Writing skills workshops are run by the Research Office as part of the Generic Skills week of workshops.

3.6.2 Actions

3.6.2.1 ADRT has obtained a file of Menzies staff names and created individual access for each staff member. (as 3.5.2.3).

3.6.2.2 LL SER, is offering a workshop on using EndNote Web; and has helped researchers with exporting data from Excel into EndNote.

3.6.2.3 RSC and LL SER, to develop a workshop on accessing multidisciplinary resources based on current subscriptions.

3.6.2.4 RSC and LL MSHR, ran a workshop on Setting up alerts in health databases on 10 June.

3.6.2.5 RSC has promoted the series of online workshops.

3.6.2.6 RSC has referred the request for non-Library workshops such as the Presentation skills and Writing skills workshops to the Office of Research and Innovation.

3.7 Online support

In relation to the usage of online resources, no researcher appeared to be familiar with the Library’s series of podcasts or video tutorials.

Those that were familiar with the MyResearch web page found it really useful, as it was informative and contributed to the independence of researchers. One SER researcher commented that one of the research supervisor interviews on MyResearch had poor sound.

3.7.1 Response by Library: Library staff acknowledged the need to better promote the podcasts. Although the MyResearch web page was now linked from both the Library and Research Office web sites, and regularly promoted at workshops and at research inductions, more needed to be done to promote this page.
3.7.2 Actions:

3.7.2.1 RSC and all LLs to continue promoting the podcasts, video tutorials and MyResearch web page to the research community.

3.7.2.2 RSC will continue promoting all relevant research resources to the research mailing lists and to the Office of Research and Innovation.

3.7.2.3 RSC has requested research supervisors to help promote the MyResearch web pages to their students.

3.7.2.4 RSC contacted the Teaching and Learning Quality Group Web and Multimedia team who produced the interview videos, to help correct the problem with the sound, and which has now been done.

3.7 Other issues

Researchers from SSPR raised a number of other issues relating to the Library. One researcher enquired about the possibility of staff being able to access the general use computers in the Library, and suggested the possibility of wireless access in the Coffee Shop. Another researcher said she was having difficulties with opening PDF files of full-text in databases on her Mac.

Research students in SER commented that while they appreciated the orientation provided to new students by the Library, the Office of Research and Innovation also needed to organise orientation for new students, and that the induction provided to new international students was not useful.

3.7.1 Response by Library: ITMS have now enabled staff access to computers in the Learning Precinct so this is resolved. Likewise wireless access is now available at the Coffee Shop but staff need to lobby for it to remain open the same hours as the Library. A campus-wide project to open up outdoor spaces including Library balconies is currently being considered by Facilities.

RSC had previously made the suggestion that an orientation session be held for new research students to the Office of Research and Innovation, and this had since been taken up. The orientation session took place in April at the beginning of the week of Generic Skills Workshops.

3.7.2 Actions

3.7.2.1 Researcher to send screen capture of error messages to RSC/ADRT for follow up. This has not been received to date.

4. Summary

Overall, members of the focus groups agreed that the Library was serving the needs of the research community, although better in some areas than others. In particular they were satisfied with the current range of workshops that are being offered as they serve the needs of the research community well. Researchers also stated that the Library’s Interlibrary Loan service worked well, and proved particularly useful in filling gaps in the journal collection.
A major issue raised was the lack of funds available in acquiring quality resources to support research. It is of particular concern that the Library’s acquisition budget is not indexed to the rising costs of resources and there are no mechanisms in place to ensure that new teaching and research resource needs are met. Without adequate budgetary resources, the support that the Library provides to researchers will not be commensurate with the quality and extent of research being conducted at CDU, now or in the future. A new way of determining budgetary allocations, conditional both on the teaching and research needs of the University needs to be developed.

The participation of researchers and research students from the four Schools in the focus group meetings has proved invaluable and their commitment in providing useful feedback to the Library is acknowledged. Similar exercises need to be conducted on a regular basis, to ensure that the Library best responds to the needs of the research community in a constantly changing environment.

A fuller version of this report with appendices, is available from the Library.

Jayshree Mamtora
Research Services Coordinator
April 2010