

# Good... better... best

## On the road to best practice at the NT university library

In July 1995 the Northern Territory university library became the first non product-based, non profit-driven organisation to receive funding through the Australian Best Practice Demonstration Program.

During the six months since the last site assessment visit the university library has engaged in a range of activities aimed at emphasising best practice both in a library wide setting and specifically within research and information services. Many of the activities build on the recommendations which came out of a series of focus group meetings conducted by the best practice coordinator with academics and postgraduates from the majority of disciplines taught at the university. The focus group meetings were conducted at the beginning of the project as a means of ascertaining what our clients considered the hallmarks of a quality research information service to be.

All library staff have attended best practice and team building workshops. The workshops identified areas and processes where staff felt improvements could be made. Those processes suitable for benchmarking were noted and a benchmarking project in the university library's purchasing, cataloguing and processing branch has now commenced.

In February, an information technology needs assessment was undertaken. All staff attended four, one-hour information technology awareness sessions which covered Windows, e-mail, word processing and the world wide web. New PCs have since been allocated to all staff members progressively on the basis of need.

### Progress in improving research services

Participation in CAUL and other electronic trials and their promotion of the trials to research clients has been a high priority. Access to the majority of services on offer is provided through the university library homepage.

The NT university library homepage was launched in August 1995. The homepage committee is currently establishing policies, standards and guidelines for the continued development of the library homepage and to provide a best practice model for other parts of the university.

The appointment of an information skills coordinator within the research and information services branch has facilitated the provision of a high quality information skills program aimed at teaching clients how to access and efficiently use the ever increasing range of electronic resources available in the library.

In April, the relationship between the university library and the NT Trade Development Zone Authority was formalised with the signing of a service agreement. The commercial VeNTure service was also launched and is being used by the NT business sector.

In July, reference staff provided electronic expertise for the technology playground during the 8th National library Technicians conference hosted by the NT university.

Recently, the university library re-drafted its strategic plan based on input from all branches. The updated version links objectives to performance indicators and, where relevant, to those which form part of the best practice program. The library is also using the three performance indicators developed by CAUL to measure fill-rate and turnaround time in document delivery, customer satisfaction and materials availability. It is hoped that data collected from the indicators will form the basis for the formation of benchmarking partnerships with the academic library community in Australia and, hopefully overseas.

The recommendations of the *Report on performance standards in reference services* developed by the CAVAL Reference Interest Group will be adopted as the standard for reference at the NT university library.

In May 1995, a CAUL survey on benchmarking was circulated to all Australian university libraries. The results indicate that benchmarking as a technique for improvement is being considered by many of the university libraries but few have actually engaged in benchmarking activities. The NT university library purchasing, cataloguing and processing branch is currently involved in benchmarking the monograph receipt to cataloguing process. Other processes identified for benchmarking include cataloguing to availability on the shelves; monograph order to receipt; serials processing; document delivery and shelving.

Networking and preliminary benchmarking site visits have been made to a number of university libraries in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne by NT university library staff this year. In November, the best practice coordinator will spend two weeks visiting academic libraries on the west coast of the United States with the specific purpose of looking at the innovative delivery of research information services. Areas of particular interest include different models of reference service; use of technology — teaching libraries; electronic reference rooms; evaluation/measurement of reference service.

Additional information about the project is available from the project coordinator, Anne Wilson (anne@library.ntu.edu.au); phone 089 46 6758); from the NT university library homepage (<http://www.ntu.edu.au/library/bestprac.html>) and via the listserver where the texts of various documents relating to the project are housed (listserver@library.ntu.edu.au). Anyone interested in quality issues in relation to libraries can subscribe to the quality list by sending a message to listserver@library.ntu.edu.au

*Anne Wilson, Best practice project coordinator, NTU*

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