

TAFE Libraries

On track for flexible learning support

TAFE NSW North Coast Institute Library and Information services aspire to support the institute's educational delivery in both traditional and emerging educational methodologies. The expansion of flexible learning strategies across the institute has brought some valuable opportunities, and has stimulated us to adopt a spirit of innovation in our resources and services.

Library resources go online

Additional funding has made it possible to develop and publish a student website 'The Learning Centre' <http://www.ncistudent.net> With the collaboration of General Education teachers, a wide range of study tips and links have been published. The site remains heavily downloaded and is cited by the Curriculum Centre as a comprehensive resource to support the 'Learning to learn' module. This online

material offers in attractive form for off-campus access.

'The Information Centre' <http://www.ncistudent.net/tic/> part of the website hosts the constantly expanding web-based services and resources of Library & Information Services. From core content to offering access to the online TAFE NSW Library Network catalogue, it provides online access to a huge quantity of quality resources, including periodical and reference databases, e-book collections, and links to recommended websites.

Off-campus access to these resources has always been highlighted in our purchasing considerations in our attempt to guarantee all students have access to the same resources. However flexible learning students remote from the campus from which their course originates may face some disadvantages in accessing physical library resources. Recognising this, we have ensured that new flexibly delivered courses with institute-wide enrolment are well-supported by relevant e-books and e-journal content. The Frontline management and vocational education courses are particular examples.

Your cybrarian

Students who are off-campus or on-campus only for brief periods of time may miss out on instruction in research skills available to full-time on-campus classes. To develop a key resource in this area, a project team developed Searchpath <http://www.ncistudent.net/searchpath/searchpath.htm> This tutorial offers introductory information literacy training to students. The tutorial has been promoted with posters and bookmarks, and is regularly updated in the form of Flash video presentations providing brief 'how to' instruction about using the interfaces of our major search tools and databases.

Technology tips are offered on the website, and guidance is provided in the choice of search engines. Students can follow links provided to extend their knowledge of Microsoft Office products to produce assignments, and learn more about using and manipulating images.

Meanwhile, back at the library

Libraries have found that their traditional facilities and services have also contributed to the support of flexible learning. The campus library provides a quiet study environment, and access to computers has become steadily more popular. The libraries all offer at least one group study room, where students can work with fellow students, for example on shared class presentations.


What's ahead

Flexible learning remains firmly in the spotlight as a major strategic direction for North Coast Institute. Established in 2006 as a new Institute unit, The Hub provides specialist staff that support and empower teachers in developing skills in flexible learning technologies. Recently, an 'E-Learning centre' was set up at Taree campus where librarians will assist by providing institute teaching staff with managed access to the Centre (a work centre equipped with flexible learning technologies) and by arranging for equipment loans.

Library & Information Services continues to develop the range of electronic resources available for on- and off-campus access and currently we are focused on making resources easier to locate and access. Statistics including page accesses, surfing patterns and download counts are used to judge where effort in innovation is likely to prove most fruitful.

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