

## Pathway to information literacy: Teaching Indigenous Learners unit at Charles Darwin University Library

Teaching Indigenous Learners is a core third year unit of Charles Darwin University's Bachelor of Teaching and Learning degree, aimed at equipping Education students, who are mostly non-indigenous, with the skills to teach Indigenous learners ranging in age from early childhood to adulthood. It is likely that once these students graduate some will be employed in teaching roles in Northern Territory, including remote indigenous communities. Topics covered in the unit include: *Historical perspectives of Indigenous education, Indigenous education in the Northern Territory, Diverse experience of education, Health and education in the school community, Language and culture, Literacy and numeracy in the classroom, Effective approaches to indigenous education, Community and urban schools and classrooms.* Lecturer, Dr Linda Ford, invited Liaison Librarians, Kaye Henderson, (School of Australian Indigenous Knowledge Systems – SAIKS) and Jessie Mahjouri (School of Education) to embed Information Literacy into her unit. Linda is very supportive of libraries and recognises that her students need to have information literacy skills, not only for this unit, but for when they qualify as teachers. Linda says that "good teaching is always backed up by good research and literature". It is envisaged that the information literacy skills learnt in this unit will then be passed onto their own students once they graduate and are employed as teachers, therefore continuing the pathway of learning information literacy.

In semester one, the unit is run externally using Learnline, the University's learning management software, for delivering external units over the Internet. The students are welcomed to the unit, by Dr Linda Ford, using a podcast, with Linda speaking in the traditional Mak Mak language, English and the audio is also transcribed. Kaye and Jessie have developed the concept of 'the learning pathway'. Students are led along the pathway aimed at making them efficient and effective users of online resources. The pathway starts by recommending students revise the basic skills, undertaking a series of online researching skills tutorials. These can be found at the following link <http://learnline.cdu.edu.au/researchingskills/> Examples of how students can extend their research are woven into the topic content. Suggestions of specific databases and keywords that might provide good results are inserted at the point of need, therefore making the students searching experience relevant to their studies. Simple but effective modelling techniques such as screen dumps of search boxes from Informit, Ebsco and CrossSearcher, the library's federated search tool are included with relevant examples of search statements placed in the appropriate fields. Students are encouraged to be persistent and not to give up. Links to Ask Us, the library's online help service are provided. The unit's discussion board, where students can ask questions, is monitored by Kaye and Jessie, and the library questions are

answered as required. Assistance has been given to Linda in locating copyright cleared photographs to help enhance the cultural awareness of her topics and generate discussion by the students and herself.

Students have also been introduced to community 'network' resources such as the Northern Territory Library and Knowledge Centres, which were recipients of the Bill and Melinda Gates Access to Learning award in 2007. Making students aware of the 'information' resources they will have available to them, once they become teachers out in the communities is an important aspect of the learning experience. Some of these Homeland communities are quite remote and are regularly isolated, cut off by road and air due to monsoonal weather and flooding.

Jessie and Kaye have found the experience of embedding information literacy in to Teaching Indigenous Learners to be professionally rewarding.

We have worked with and learnt from Linda, who is very knowledgeable, an authority, in her field, as well as working with IT staff to learn the technical aspects of Learnline. In addition, we found that we were broadening Linda's knowledge of databases and library resources in general. We also learnt how to tailor the library resources to a unit of study's need and meeting the unit's assessment requirements. We look forward to using this new model for other core units in higher education, here at Charles Darwin University Library.

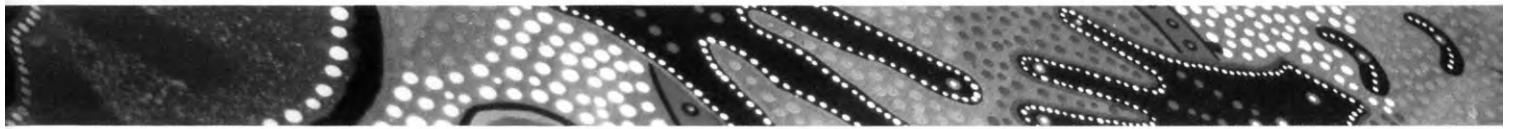
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## The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library Information and Resource Network or ATSILIRN for short

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia are diverse in their cultures, histories and languages, making their information requirements equally diverse. Australia has over 200 distinct Aboriginal groups, plus the peoples of the Torres Strait where approximately 100 languages are still spoken. There is also an increase in Indigenous authors writing not only in English but also in their own languages, such as Pitjantjatjara, Yolngu and Aranda. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are strong within themselves, but trying to navigate through the library and archival worlds can be difficult.

ATSILIRN was established after it was recognised that there was a need for a support and information network for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in libraries and for those people servicing the information needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We do this via conferences, our web site, and newsletters.



The executive comprises President (Melissa Jackson), Vice President (Kathy Frankland), Secretary (Judy Martin), Treasurer (Ronald Briggs) and Public Officer (Pat Brady). There are also State and Territory representatives. We have a wide range of membership options including Individual, Associate, Organisational and Student. While membership is open to everyone, the Executive must be Indigenous.

We are very fortunate to have the unwavering support of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. One of the ways that they show their support is in the administration of the ATSILIRN website <http://www1.aiatsis.gov.au/atsilirn/home/index.html>

Recently Suzi Russell from State Library of South Australia has taken over from Tania Schaefer of State Library of Queensland as editor of our newsletter. Produced quarterly, it is full of contributions from the membership highlighting services and initiatives they provide for the Indigenous people of their community.

From 1994 until 2008, we have had 10 conferences in places such as Sydney, Canberra, Adelaide and Darwin. Delegates and speakers have come from all around the globe including USA, UK, New Zealand and the Federated States of Micronesia. We will be gathering on 15th and 16th April 2009 at the University of Notre Dame, Broome Campus for our next conference. Be sure to check out the ATSILIRN website closer to that date for our full program of speakers and events.

Unfortunately when conferences are held in a state or town other than your own, it is almost impossible to attend and finding the money can be a big factor behind that. The Loris Williams Grant of \$1000 was established in honour of our esteemed former President to assist an Indigenous ATSILIRN member to attend an ATSILIRN conference in a state or territory other than the one they live in.

ATSILIRN is very proud to have been heavily involved in the production of two publications - The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols for Libraries, Archives and Information Services and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Thesaurus.

The Protocols, compiled by Alex Byrne, Heather Moorcroft, Alana Garwood-Houng and Alan Barnes are intended to guide libraries, archives and information services in ways to interact with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and to handle material with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content. Martin Nakata of Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning UTS, has recently investigated the effectiveness of the Protocols 10 years after they were first published finding the need for only one change. As per Martin's recommendation we have included a section that deals with Digitisation and the Internet. The Protocols are available from the ATSILIRN webpage.

One of the first resolutions of the fledgling ATSILIRN was the development of an Indigenous thesaurus because it was thought the Library of Congress Subject Headings were inappropriate and often offensive. Delegates at both the first

and second conference workshopped various aspects of the Thesaurus before it was published by the National Library of Australia in 1997. It was compiled by Heather Moorcroft and Alana Garwood-Houng.

We are affiliated with similar networks from other countries including the Maori Library Workers Network, the American Indian Library Workers Network and the Pacific Islands Archives, Libraries and Museums Network. We are a founding member of the International Indigenous Librarians Forum co-hosting the Forum with State Library of Queensland in Brisbane 2007.

ATSILIRN is the only Indigenous special interest group within the library profession in Australia for workers to join. After a few lean years with regards to membership, it is reassuring that at our last conference we had representation from all states and territories of Australia with much interest shown from overseas library professionals.

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## JCU Libraries support for Indigenous students

James Cook University Libraries are committed to supporting Indigenous students. Several years ago the position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library Liaison Officer was established to support indigenous students and to ensure that they felt welcome in the Library. The Officer also works with the Faculty Librarian for Arts, Education and Social Sciences to provide information literacy training and support for indigenous students participating in the Remote Area Teacher Education Program (RATEP). In 2007, funding was provided to develop an online interactive information literacy module to assist students to find information on Indigenous topics. Online Information Skills for Indigenous Studies aims to help rural, remote and off campus students gain a better understanding of resource discovery tools such as the catalogue, Reserve Online and database searching techniques. The University has also established the Indigenous Health Careers Access Program (IHCAP), a tailored, preparation program to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students further develop their academic skills before they enter their program of study. The Faculty Librarian for Medicine, Health and Molecular Sciences Librarian provides tours and information literacy training as part of the IHCAP.

JCU Libraries: <http://www.jcu.edu.au/libcomp/>

Eddie Koiki Mabo Library Building: <http://www.library.jcu.edu.au/About/building.shtml>

RATEP: <http://www.ratep.jcu.edu.au/>

Online Information Skills for Indigenous Studies: <http://www.library.jcu.edu.au/OIS/>

Special Collections: <http://www.library.jcu.edu.au/Specials/>

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