

Strengthening partnerships

Swinburne Research

Our research office is an innovative and proactive area, and we have worked together to identify a range of areas where a reliable source of publications data can be of use to them. Rather than conducting a full data collection process each year, our research office can now rely on a data extract from Swinburne Research Bank to help meet publications reporting requirements. They can also call on the knowledge we've gained through dealing with publications to help classify areas of research interest for Swinburne academics.

Swinburne Marketing

Our marketing area needs an easy way to stay in touch with the activities and achievements of Swinburne researchers. Swinburne Research Bank provides them with a 'one-stop shop' to see what Swinburne academics are publishing. Our cross-disciplinary coverage helps them identify stories of interest that represent Swinburne's research successes and strengths.

Swinburne academics

Swinburne Research Bank has helped the library strengthen its relationship with individual academic staff. We're building our knowledge of how they choose to make their research findings available, as well as better understanding the cultural

differences between disciplines and strengthening our dialogue with them.

Building partnerships with all our user groups helps make Swinburne Library services more responsive.

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Swinburne: engaging TAFE students within a university environment

Having worked in a TAFE library for over a decade, I didn't think it would be all that different working in the TAFE sector of the dual sector Swinburne University. It did, however, become clear that there are challenges associated with providing library services to students undertaking a range of study from pre-apprenticeships through to PhD research. These challenges the library staff at Swinburne work daily to meet, and do so with some flair.

Of the five libraries at Swinburne, two primarily serve TAFE students (with three mixed), and that allows the staff to experiment with a range of services aimed solely at this cohort. For example, at the Croydon campus, with a range of Child Care and Trade courses, the introduction of a Wii for use in the library has been a great way to reduce the 'academic' stigma often associated with the library. The introduction of lunchtime comedy screenings this year is also aimed at getting students to walk through the doors of the library. As students feel comfortable not only being in the library but also talking to library staff, it will no longer be a scary prospect to ask for help when it comes to working on assignments.

Engaging TAFE students with the library and encouraging them to seek help with research and assignments has become all the more crucial with the introduction of the Victorian Skills Reform Agenda. With the introduction of contestability and a change in funding agreements, keeping students engaged and achieving in their course is vital for the TAFE Division. The library will play a significant part in not only helping students achieve educational outcomes, but also feeling welcome and at ease on their campus. For some students the library has become their 'third place', that community space which is not home or work where they feel comfortable to socialise and connect online.

There is also an issue of matching electronic access to information with students' needs. Accessing the current Swinburne library homepage can be quite daunting for many of our TAFE students, with the extensive range of options available. More electronic information available to TAFE students because they are part of a university can be a double-edged sword: the difference between access to a limited number of targeted electronic databases compared with hundreds, which for the most part are of no relevance to these students.

But are TAFE students really that different to Higher Education students when it comes to library needs? A client survey done in 2008 asked students to highlight those areas of the library and its service that were important to them and to rate how the library was performing. For both TAFE and Higher Education undergraduate students 4 of the top 5 issues of importance were the same, issues of access to PCs, photocopying and printing, and interactions with the librarians. And when it came to areas for improvement, both TAFE and HE undergraduate students highlighted numbers of PCs, the need for suitable study facilities, noise levels in the library, and adequate photocopying and printing facilities. Maybe there isn't such a big difference providing library services for TAFE students within a dual sector environment.

As the range of TAFE courses continues to expand with the introduction of vocational degrees, librarians will also need to meet the information needs of an ever expanding cohort, a challenge we at Swinburne University already meet.

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Building literacy skills within the university library

Literacy skills are a fundamental component of many work tasks required in the typical jobs for which a university graduate might apply. But for some students being literate in English can become something of a challenge, particularly if literacy problems have not been dealt with adequately at the secondary or early tertiary levels. So how do some students get to university with limited literacy skills? And what role does a university librarian play in helping students with lower levels of literacy?

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