

Enter the e-library

It's certainly a conversation stopper – you're a librarian (guilt - I haven't returned my library books) and you work for the Tax Office (more guilt - I haven't lodged my tax return). But telling people how the ATO has revolutionised information services to its 22 000 staff located across 58 sites throughout Australia usually stops the guilt trip and kick-starts the conversation.

A review of our library services in 2008 recommended placing less emphasis on physical libraries, and a greater emphasis on online information provision. The solution: our award winning virtual library service – the eLibrary.

eLibrary is much more than a library catalogue – it is a complete information sharing mechanism that captures and disseminates expert knowledge. We are now eLibrary Client Services and Content Development Librarians. The two roles are closely tied, as research requests are opportunities to use innovative web 2.0 technologies to build online resources for use by others with similar information needs.

eLibrarians also approach teams throughout the ATO to understand the work they are doing, then collaborate with experts to develop eLibrary products to provide the resources needed to complete the work.

Subject matter experts are sharing their knowledge by writing wiki articles and eLibrarians are adding value by contributing RSS newsfeeds and links to online resources – web sites, ebooks, eJournal articles, internal databases, research guides, and related wikis. eLibrarians then provide virtual wiki creation and editing training to these experts, allowing them, as wiki owners, to maintain and update the wiki.

Virtual training is conducted using teleconferencing and computer application sharing software that enables participants to see the trainer's screen on their own monitor.

The ATO has virtual teams spread throughout Australia, so the training session could be attended by staff located in all states.

eLibrarians also work in consultation with ATO subject

specialists, creating subject specific online 'rooms' within the eLibrary, including news feeds, web sites, research guides, and the general library catalogue search function. This option is preferred for dynamic content or research information available. Alerting services are also widely promoted to monitor industries, companies, people, and trends.

Podcasts and webcasts of CPD sessions, guest speakers, and debriefings held throughout the ATO are posted onto the eLibrary's rooms or wiki for all to access from their desktops.

Despite the revolution, we still have print resources, although ebooks are taking over in popularity. A Central Lending Collection, located in one of our Canberra Offices, holds the print collection which covers tax (obviously) both in Australia and internationally, accounting, business, government, industries, law, management, technology, and everything in between.

ATO library staff have mastered many web 2.0 applications working within the restrictions of the ATO's sophisticated firewall.

All use modern research tools, knowledge sharing, and web 2.0 technologies, and readily engage in client liaison, collaboration, and co-design to create eLibrary content. It is both exciting and satisfying to have the ability to implement innovative applications which keep us at the forefront of developments in information provision.

You can find more details about eLibrary at the 2009 Excellence in eGovernment Awards web site.

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