Stepping up, stepping out.

When we issued the theme for this month's magazine, it was admittedly far from precise, but we knew we wanted to find out about library and information services doing things differently. And we have been swamped with news of innovations from across Australia, in public libraries, academic libraries and special libraries. Staff in these services are justifiably proud of what they have achieved and excited about what might come in the future. So now all that's left is for their colleagues to read on and be just as proud to be sharing in such a dynamic, responsive profession (but you knew it was, didn't you?)

CATCH A NEW IDEA

When senior management at Southern Cross University Library put the idea of a Pitch Club to staff as part of an end of year event, the aim was simple: to elicit new ideas from staff, give them the opportunity to sell their idea and challenge the way things were done. It resulted in some excellent ideas being presented that have since been implemented at the library. Karen Jordan reports.

The inaugural Pitch Club in December 2009 saw 11 staff members come forward to pitch ideas to their colleagues. After being introduced, staff had one minute to sell their idea. The audience of library staff were then given one vote each for the idea they liked best.

The presenters of the two ideas with the most votes were then given another five minutes to further present their idea, before the winner was chosen by a judging panel made up of staff from various library departments. To assist with implementing the winning idea, the finalist was asked to develop a project proposal stating the objectives, outputs, costs and timeframe, which also provided an opportunity to develop project management skills.

Not only have the winning ideas been implemented but a range of creative innovations generated through the Pitch Club have also now been realised. The 2009 winning pitch resulted in the launch of SCU Library TV. Liaison Librarian Tracy Tees wanted to have a central resource where students could be directed for help with common tasks.

"The popularity of YouTube showed how keen people are to get information in a visual format so Pitch Club was an opportunity to present an idea that I had been kicking around for a while," said Tracy.

Now, more than 50 library video tutorials are available in one section of the library website (**sculibrarytv. info/**). The videos can be easily searched, providing a one-stop learning shop for students. Users can also suggest a topic for a video – which supports different learning styles, and also allows academic staff to suggest a library video which would support their students' needs.

Sharon Barnett, 2010 Pitch winner in the university gardens

The 2010 winning pitch was Administrative Officer Sharon Barnett's idea to 'green' the library. Following a presentation to the library by the University Sustainability Officer, Sharon began to observe the library's practices more closely and saw that there were things that could be done better in terms of energy use, waste management and procurement.

"I saw an opportunity to enhance our connection to the natural environment by developing sustainable initiatives that could bring staff and students together outside the confines of the building," Sharon said.

"The Pitch Club has encouraged staff to think outside of the box and have their innovations rewarded."

SCU Library TV

Sharon's pitch challenged library staff from all campuses to think about sustainability and to make a commitment to strengthening sustainable practices to support the University's objectives while connecting them through a common goal. Since winning Pitch Club, a number of sustainable initiatives have been implemented, including posters with tips on double-sided printing and recycling, the recycling of library newspapers and waste paper and campus energy audits. Home energy audit kits will soon be available for loan and development of a website is underway to update staff of the progress in greening the library.

The Pitch Club has encouraged staff to think outside of the box and have their innovations rewarded. It has resulted in real ideas being implemented, and while the winner and runner-up received prizes, the real prize has been seeing ideas supported and implemented.

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LIBRARIES BECOMING PUBLISHERS

Libraries now actively create knowledge and disseminate this to the world around them. One concrete example of this is the trend towards the establishment of publishing operations within libraries, writes Nathan Hollier.

The Australian National University, Sydney University, the University of Technology Sydney, the University of Adelaide, Swinburne University and Monash University all have library based university presses, while more presses of this kind, I believe, are on the way.
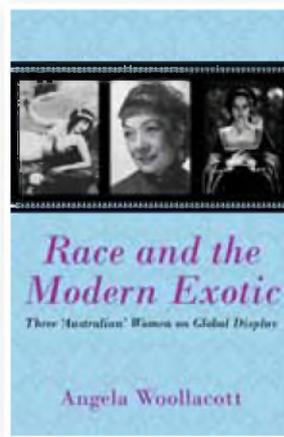
Libraries can be seen to be well positioned – and have an especially strong motivation – to take advantage of new opportunities to publish widely, deeply and (comparatively) cheaply, afforded by the dramatic development of digital technology in recent decades. Libraries occupy a relatively politically neutral position within the university, they have been centrally engaged with the development of digital content storage, indexing, searching and dissemination initiatives across multitudinous platforms and media, and they have borne the brunt of sharply increased costs of acquiring content, particularly for journals in the branches of science where the most research funding can be found. With the exception of Sydney University Press, which has a 'pre-digital' history and is now also embracing digital paths to content delivery, all of the presses referred to above were founded as 'e' or electronic operations.

Last year, Monash University ePress was rebranded as Monash University Publishing. The change in name reflected both a conviction that the traditional/digital publishing divide is now a false one, since publishers almost always make use of both forms of technology simultaneously and in conjunction with each other, as well as an attendant desire to operate successfully within traditional and electronic publishing spaces, industries, markets.

A forthcoming title from Monash University Publishing

So far this transition has been managed - with encouraging print sales, maximised web visibility and some major new works for both academic and more popular audiences either published or in the pipeline – and is helping the press and the library of which it is part to reach out and engage in new ways with readers and the wider community.

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