

Murdoch University Library stays relevant with the help of assistive technologies.

Like any higher educational institution, Murdoch University Library is a very important component of student life no matter where our staff and students are geographically located. We are committed to ensuring that our offshore students experience the same support from our library as those studying on one of our local campuses or externally across Australia.

To meet this important need, our library provides a large body of learning support and other library services to our Academic staff and students via our website, we were not convinced that we

were well placed to effectively communicate that support to students located at our offshore partner institutions. We decided to personalise our offshore support using an assistive technology – in fact, technology was our only option. This was most definitely a project for a small group of very creative Generation Y professional staff at Murdoch that I mentally

refer to as 'our bright young things'. The group was given a background brief, and advised the only non-negotiable outcome was that any solutions identified must fit within our existing library website. This requirement would greatly reduce any need to maintain and edit the solution separately to our existing webpage. The last, but not surprising, piece of advice that I think really encourages creativity is – "there is no budget for this project".

These aforementioned 'bright young things' identified geographical location as an entry point to our library website as a solution. This means that we can identify the country a visitor is coming from and change our library homepage to suit them.

Because of this capability we have established an option for staff and students in Dubai, Singapore, and Malaysia to automatically be directed to a page specifically developed for their institution with relevant and appropriate information regarding available support, both at the offshore location, and from our library in Perth, all within our existing website.

We are using MaxMind Geolite's IP database to provide the functionality for this service. The offshore servers respond very simply – with a country code.

We do not redirect users' browsers to their country-specific page; quite simply all we do is make it available for them to click through to, from our front page, and a number of measures are commonly in place to stop so-called "browser hijacking".

All other options to locate our services and teaching and learning support are still available under these dedicated pages and will remain the same as has previously been offered.

Because everything is managed on the user side, it is a matter of making their browsers do what we want, in response to the choice they make, as opposed to giving them what we want them to have.

Students in Dubai immediately began using the page and accessing the resources relevant to their studies, and after being published for just one month, the Singapore Landing Page was providing very reassuring raw data and statistics that students there were also actively seeking access to

the specific resources, e-books, and databases relevant to their course from this dedicated space. We have embedded our Facebook page on the offshore landing pages and, in general, students in the Singaporean partner institutions are beginning to use Facebook as a primary means of contact for reference help and not solely as the social space we intended. This student-driven need for us to respond with help in that space will be the cause of further evaluation and investigation by library staff about how best to respond and further develop support if this trend continues.

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