



Learning on the

Outside

Staff at the State Library of Queensland (SLQ) have been getting out of their workspaces and learning from colleagues both in and outside of the building. In 2014, staff from Discovery and Visitor Services implemented different professional development approaches to expand their knowledge and expertise. CLARE THORPE tells us more.

'Discover Discovery' was a professional experience program for staff in the Discovery team who are responsible for the acquisition, accessibility and preservation of SLQ's collections. The program used the collection management of newspapers as a framework to give staff the opportunity to learn more about how each of the various units in Discovery acquire, describe, store and preserve newspapers for contemporary and future use.

Staff from three units hosted occasional short tours and information sessions in their workspaces from May to November 2014. These sessions, following the lifecycle of newspapers, started with Description Services (acquisitions and cataloguing), then Collection Access (access and storage) and finished at Collection Preservation (digitisation and preservation). A fourth unit, Discovery Services, demonstrated a text-correcting activity in Trove (advertised as 'Trovetober'). The Discovery News was also distributed to all staff. This featured information about each unit's role, as well as discussions of the future challenges for the management of newspapers in libraries.

While attendance at these sessions was optional, more than two-thirds of Discovery staff participated. An online survey used to evaluate the program, as well as anecdotal feedback from those who took part, indicated the success of the program. There was a greater understanding of the complexity of managing newspapers across all units, increased appreciation for the work of staff in other units and, in some cases, the opportunity for staff to meet each other and put faces to names. Survey results also indicated that staff

would support a version of the program being run again in the future.

Visitor Services staff ventured even further afield to explore what makes great customer service. In June 2014, fifteen permanent and casual staff spent the day visiting a bank, dining at a teppanyaki restaurant and going on a mystery shopping expedition for a laptop.

The day began at the Commonwealth Bank's flagship Adelaide Street branch. Staff heard about the bank's customer service philosophy, including concierge services, and a demonstration of the bank's latest touch screen technologies – and they enjoyed a coffee from the bank's cafe.

This was followed by a short walk to the Stamford Hotel, where they relaxed in the lounge lobby and ate teppanyaki at the Kabuki Restaurant. Teams of two then headed off to the Apple Store, David Jones, Myer and JB Hi-Fi to evaluate retail experiences as mystery shoppers looking to purchase a MacBook Air.

According to the Visitor Services Manager, Linda Beard, the day was all about exploring customer service. She said it was the first time that all the Visitor Services staff had been able to participate in an activity together and enjoy being out of the office. Feedback from team members was extremely positive; staff appreciated the opportunity to refresh their client engagement skills by examining and reflecting on customer service in retail, hospitality and financial services settings.

While these activities offered diverse experiences, both programs have given staff the opportunity to spend time away from their usual workspace and to consider their role at SLQ from a different perspective.

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