

BLAZING TRAILS



The busy foyer of Griffith University Library

The Library Campus Coordinators at Griffith University Library tell us why they stand out from the crowd as an inspiration.

What does Griffith University Library do that sets us apart from the rest?

The answer? A long history of user-centred trailblazing. Our strengths are our ability to embrace change, look inward as well as outward for inspiration and opportunity, and set our eyes firmly on the future. We have been trailblazers in service provision, space utilisation and engagement, making the library the heart of the campus.

In 1995, we launched IT support in the library, moving to a single service point for library, IT and student printing in 2008. We were one of the first Australian academic libraries to provide a fully integrated library and IT service in 2013. We are early adopters; as the university environment and teaching modes developed, we proactively moved librarians from first-tier support to specialist support. The result: librarians now focus on more complex queries and activities that have a higher impact for the university.

In 2015, we adopted a Scholarly Resource Strategy and implemented a reading list service; this helps deliver an increase to anytime, anywhere, any-device access to resources, and we now spend 98 percent of the library resource budget on digital resources. We were the first Australian university library to have academic staff comprehensively manage their own course readings, and in 2016 reading list page views were close to 2.4 million with over 607,000 user sessions. In 2017, page views have increased by 57 percent and user sessions are up by 59 percent based on year-to-date data. By 2018, we aim to have 95 percent of Griffith's required and recommended readings available online, and we will continue to reduce the collection footprint thereby increasing available space, activating life in the university.

Top left: Griffith University Library

Top right: Students participating in the Human Library

Not only are we trailblazers with service provision, but we are also the heart of the campus. Our Music in the Library initiative (bit.ly/2u34xdt) provides a place for our conservatorium students to perform in public.

In a first for a Queensland university we hosted the Human Library (bit.ly/2sFmM3d) event, with 60 human books borrowed. Staff and students shared their personal stories, which covered topics from activism and adoption to Islam and immigration.

In 2016, we developed and launched Walking in Rainbow Shoes (bit.ly/2sFNb0U). This initiative resulted in an online education module that promotes diversity and understanding. The module, which highlights our libraries as safe spaces, is available for all staff and students to access.

We have been keen advocates of increasing student employability, and we initiated a student employment program, which has now employed over 500 students since 2012. This has provided the library with an opportunity to work closely with our students as well as giving them valuable work experience.

So what makes Griffith University Library so remarkable? The library is committed to providing meaningful and accessible services, resources and experiences that help create influential graduates and support for our researchers which positively impacts the wider community. It's a big goal, but isn't that the heart of a great library service? 🌟

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The small but growing library at Campion College Australia in Sydney's western suburbs makes a point of collaborating closely with students to provide a great library service, says KEZIAH DOUGHTY.

Clear communication with library users is vital when trying to improve any aspect of the library, so to assess the usefulness of some online resources, I turned not only to usage statistics but also to the students for feedback.

First, I gathered some general comments on small feedback slips that were available from the reference desk. I then ran some informal focus groups to get an idea of which resources were most valuable and why.

Using this information, I designed a 10-question online survey targeted to specific online resources in order to gauge their usefulness to library users. I included two reflective questions: 'How effectively do you think you use the online resources?' and 'How important are these online resources to you?' The other questions focused on specific resources. I made it clear that the purpose of the survey was to find the best resources for the students and their needs and, when they realised that they were being offered the chance to collaborate, many were eager to participate.

With a response rate over 50 percent, including many optional comments, I was able to identify and promote the most beneficial resources for students and cut down on others. The survey also highlighted specific issues associated with access and user education that I was able to address with support and advice from academic staff.

Collaboration with library users contributes to a great library service. Not only has this approach assisted me in making valuable changes to Campion's library service and resources, but it has also given the students an active role to play in their library and a greater sense of ownership. 


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TARA BALL outlines how forging relationships – not only with students but also with parents and other libraries – helps to create a better school library.

One of the main reasons I love working in a school library is the relationships we foster with students, staff and parents. With students, it's about watching them grow as readers and experiment with their tastes in books. They can discuss their interests and passions with librarians and learn to connect with adults. Students use the library to relax, read, play games, finish homework, and get access to help.

We develop trusting and collaborative relationships with our teachers, who see our teacher librarians as capable educators who have specific skills for teaching research, referencing and digital literacy. We work with staff, especially our Learning Technologies team, to use the library spaces to provide an experience that may not be had in the classroom. We also forge relationships with executive staff by joining committees that give the library a voice.

Parents get to know the librarians and often ask for recommendations for their kids. Our Junior School Teacher Librarian works to ensure that parents feel a part of events in the library, such as the Parent/Teacher Challenge (during the NSW Premier's Reading Challenge).

We encourage students to visit the State Library of NSW, their local public libraries, and arrange visits with our senior students to university libraries. We have a strong social media presence that keeps our community up to date. Each year we go to conferences, presenting when we can. Meeting with other librarians helps us develop professional connections. My connections have led to the creation of a group for librarians or library managers working in schools who are not teacher librarians or library technicians. 

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