

# Scenario 2015+

---

## Context

The Government's push for greater regulation and performance measurement of universities and recent increased funding for education has engendered an environment of quality control mixed with fierce competition. Library staff have an expanded role in supporting the university in quality and performance mechanisms for teaching, learning and research.

The competition for international students is fierce nationally and around the world. Assisting students to maintain links to their home countries has meant the Library is more proactive in providing access to relevant resources. Faculty Librarians search the world for information and resources that make assignments more relevant by focusing on application to students' home countries. The webcam booth in the Library provides a facility for students to have live video calls via the web to their homes and is constantly booked, day and night. Evaluation has found it is as well used by students from the country as by international students. Exciting facilities such as these have helped the University to market itself and the Library to maintain its standing as the information and social hub on campus.

The University's Dubai campus has expanded to three additional locations in the UAE and Kuwait. Research activity in particular has had exponential growth as English language research dealing with this previously neglected region finds an academic audience. Library staff involved in research support and digital library initiatives make annual visits to the region to provide training and assistance to the staff.

Programs in other international locations are based on partnerships with quality institutions and the capacity to draw these students into postgraduate or HDR programs at the Wollongong campus. Feedback from AUQA reports has instigated an increased emphasis on proper resourcing and library services are now provided under service level agreements. The management of these is similar to those at satellite sites in Australia.

After many years, a coordinated approach to increasing funding for TAFE has meant increased competition for students as school leavers look closely at job opportunities, salaries and student fees in deciding between TAFE and university. The University now provides bridging courses, advanced standing and scholarships for a wider range of TAFE subjects in order to facilitate the movement of students to university studies.

Library activities in the community engagement sphere focus on assisting the University in attracting new students. There are substantial numbers of local high school student members of the Library. This has led to a focus on digitizing collections in the Archives that are of most use to school and university level students.

The freeing up of the university system allows universities to specialize and whilst the Group of Eight maintain a large buffer between themselves and the rest of the Australian universities, institutions such as Wollongong have chosen to keep a broad range of undergraduate courses but specialize in a smaller number of postgraduate and research areas. The University is now

internationally recognized for its research, attracting HDR students from around the world and within Australia.

### **Teaching and Learning**

The range of services provided in the Library to assist teaching and learning have made it necessary to stay open 24 hours a day. This has been achieved by locking off the upper floors after 10pm. Studies found that the main requirement was for computers and quiet study areas and that numbers can be accommodated in the ground floor areas. Student casuals are employed and use their time to scan and process many of the digital items such as theses and ereadings.

Faculty Librarians are using many of the new technologies to deliver generic and discipline-specific information skills classes. The text based tutorials of old naturally include a librarian avatar (the face of the Library) who delivers voice and audio descriptions as animated searches appear. Gen Z students learn best when all the senses are engaged. Therefore, the principles of *gaming* are integrated into information skills education with the added benefit of self-evaluation of skills and knowledge attained by counting 'scores' at the end of the session. The face of the Library was developed when facial photos of current staff were stacked and merged to produce a common portrait.

Service desk interactions utilize web cam technology and VOIP with the result that queries from offshore, off campus and on campus clients can all be dealt with from the one point. This has improved the level of assistance provided to offshore students in particular.

The revolutionary change in the structure of knowledge, information, research and criticism has been enabled by the internet. Google, Wikis, and Flickr have created new methods of creating, sharing, categorizing, accessing and critiquing content, despite a central authority or a hierarchy of editorial control. Content, conclusions and the references are communally negotiated and collaboratively assembled by a variety of audiences including students.

The proliferation of social software has heightened the role of the information expert, particularly the need to teach students to ask questions which are crucial to learning. Those questions include challenges to the nature of expertise, the limitations of expertise and narrow fields of specialization. They include questions about how to evaluate information, and what criteria to use when judging sources. They include standards for what is an appropriate critique, what is civil disagreement and what is offensive hostility. And they include practical lessons about how to use these tools successfully--how to formulate search terms, and how to identify posters and categories which work effectively.

### **Research**

The support necessary to maintain the University's research status has increased in the last ten years. A small team of research training librarians work closely with research centres and institutes providing information searching support as part of grant applications and research projects. Their knowledge of the multitude of possible sources of text, images and data plays a role in the success of projects.

Similarly, the infrastructure to support the administration needs of research has grown and the Library holds an important position in the management and promotion of research. Many of the research related staff are located within the Library's Digital Initiatives Unit which manages the integrated systems on which the Library depends.

Repositories have developed to hold the major outputs of the University's research programs in all possible formats. At the end of each research project, a digital archivist assists academics to identify, package and load relevant outputs. These may encompass preprints of all publications completed during the project, datasets, images, maps and sound files. Digital rights management

functions within the repository allow the curation of this material and the definition of access rights to different parts of the data.

### **Technology**

Integration has become the technology buzz word of the second decade of the millennium. The need to navigate multiple applications has lessened as links between programs occur naturally. The environment has become more complex for the management of technology across the university however the University recognizes the importance of the infrastructure and has developed processes to keep UOW at the forefront of client service technologies.

The Library's catalogue is harvested by Google so that students searching via the search engine are made aware of material held locally. More academically focused Search engines such as Google Scholar and Scirus also provide links to subscribed material increasing the availability of scholarly literature. Google Scholar has replaced the software applications such as SFX which allowed cross database searching and were popular in the noughties.

The decrease in costs made RFID technology more affordable and all material in the physical collection is now microchipped. Annual stocktakes are easily undertaken and have improved management and maintenance of the printed material.

Library maintenance of the desktop interface is simplified as programs such as Word and Endnote are delivered via the web browser. The University adopts a centralized purchasing policy ensuring a set of basic programs are available on all university computers.

Student expectations of equipment are high with the Library providing a number of workstations incorporating scanning facilities. Portable DVDs are available for borrowing within the Library and students make use of a few hours of leisure time to watch a DVD or listen to music as they study.

Mobile phones have specialized and can be customized to include only those features required by the user. Cameras and mp3 players are optional but the mobile phone is the technology of choice for all students. Text messaging and SMS have become the main communication methods for the Library with reminder and fine notices being sent in this way. An SMS alert service provides subscribed students with regular updates on Library resources and services.

Wireless broadband is ubiquitous and affordable making phones with web connections part of student life. There is less need to provide catalogue specific terminals as students use their phones to search the catalogue as they browse the shelves. The mix of PDA and phone, begun around the time that Apple introduced its iPhone has meant the demise of pen and paper.

The University now recommends all students have small laptops or notebooks. Access to power rather than desktop machines is now the major demand by students. Over the last year the Library has implemented a battery charging service where students can leave their laptops in a secure area while at lectures and have the batteries charged so that laptops can be used at any desk. This has proven to be more cost effective than providing complete workstations.

### **Physical and Virtual Library**

The Library building has continued to be improved since the last major upgrade in 2008. Furnishings have been replaced and configurations of study spaces adjusted as student learning changes.

Sustainability and environmental concerns are a necessary part of day to day operations. The Library is heavily dependent on electricity and internet connections and as part of risk management, emergency generators have been constructed on the roof to provide sufficient power for the electricity and computer needs of the building. The generators offset the frequent summer blackouts as power consumption exceeds the capacity of the state's aging infrastructure. All

buildings on campus now have solar panels on their roofs to contribute energy into the University's grid.

Clients and staff contribute to the award winning green Library. Recycling programs are in place for paper throughout the Library. The University has made strong gains towards a paperless environment by supplying each staff member with a laptop. Meetings are now held with staff accessing digital copies on the network via their screens rather than consulting wads of paper.

The Library's web site remains the key to virtual access however new applications allow the information and services linked from the site to be seen as a 3D landscape, similar to those seen in computer games. The visual and exploratory nature of this development captures clients and opens doors to more resources than were previously discovered.

### **Collections and Publishing**

Scanning projects have made the vast majority of English language publications published before 1930 available via the web. Innovative Interfaces Inc. finally got its act together and launched a new search engine which allows the Library to offer patrons the ability to have federated searching of the Catalogue, databases and other information repositories. The explosion of repositories of a wide variety of materials has emphasized the importance of having material harvested into repository search engines and then by the giants such as *Google* and the customizable *MySearch*. New developments allow the searching of full text within the mass of scanned material but has brought with it a need for changed search strategies and visual ways of displaying the results. Cataloguers work closely with faculty librarians and academic staff in locating and preparing a wide range of materials for use in specific subjects and courses. For example, a subject in Music may include a selection of manuscripts and book titles held in the Library, information from the subscribed Groves database on composers, a link to the repository archive of all Mozart manuscripts and to relevant 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century critical works. For a university such as UOW, the access to historical works has lessened the gap between it and the larger institutions with older, more extensive collections.

New features in the catalogue allow searching by keyword and then the display of the most popular and most borrowed books in this range.

An increasing number of students are purchasing lightweight ebook readers which use a single sheet of electronic ink and replicate the feel of a book. The download station in the Library offers quota free downloads for ebooks and for other repository material. The ebook reader is becoming the best way to work through large amounts of digital text.

Government mandating of placing research outputs in repositories has added to the unstable publishing environment. Journal subscriptions exist in a multitude of formats although the conglomeration of major publishers means that the big deal is still the norm for most universities. The trend towards author payments before publication has required a change in policy from grant providers to allow this within the funding, and the provision of funding to authors, particularly for those who are able to be published in the most highly ranked journals. There is a more sophisticated recognition by the University administrators of the way in which Library resources and expertise underpin the position of UOW as one of the top Australian research institutions and of the budgets necessary to sustain this.

### **Clients, Marketing and Promotion**

Despite all the technology, navigating the huge mass of electronic information is not as straightforward as it may seem. Sites that integrate repository data and that of the increasing number of specific digital collections have become popular within higher education.

Novel promotional mechanisms are used for specific marketing programs with great effect. The use of location based advertising has proved effective. As clients pass the Library they are

messaging with information on new services or resources. The technology allows the Library to target certain messages at particular times e.g. services for part-time coursework postgraduates in the evenings; resources useful for distance students at weekends.

Clients continue to require assistance in navigating resources and services. A large number of podcasts are available to alert clients to available services. The voice descriptions are sandwiched between music supplied by student bands and composition students giving another avenue for partnerships between the Library and its clients.

## **Staffing**

Motivated, service oriented staff remain the keystone of the Library's success. Targeted and aggressive recruitment for a range of positions has assisted in attracting people to what had been seen as a small and regional institution. New graduates now view UOW Library as an appealing organization to start their career while experienced leaders and team coordinators have been head-hunted from a range of other libraries.

The cadetship program begun in the noughties has blossomed and the three concurrent cadets have provided a steady stream of experienced applicants for full time positions. One of the cadetships has been particularly focused on students studying information management but with a programming/systems speciality. This has provided the Library with additional computing expertise for many of the digital initiatives being undertaken.

The 'Retirement Crisis of 2012' as it was known, had a great impact on the profession across the nation as a large bulge of librarians reached retirement age. Realising the need to deal with this, the University created a series of workplace agreements allowing units to retain experienced staff for longer on a part-time basis. This has seen a number of Library staff continue to work but on a two or three day basis. Their expertise in conducting a number of key projects has benefited the Library immensely although team structures and training needed to be amended to allow for the capture of their knowledge before their complete retirement. Flexibility within the workforce in general has added an extra dimension to the staffing dynamic.

Training continues to be an important part of retaining good staff with the program including a range of development activities. An important focus has been the support for staff to internationalise their experience by attending and speaking at international conferences.