

# **New approaches to student training at University of Canberra Library**

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*If you build it, they will come!*

This iconic message from Director Phil Alden Robinson's 1989 movie "Field of Dreams" (Robinson, 1989), is the take-home message from our experience in the UC Library over the last 12 months. Many of you will have read about these changes in an article by our University Librarian Anita Crotty, in *InCite* of August 2007 (Crotty, 2007).

Like the students of many academic institutions, the students at UC juggle the competing demands of study, employment (often multiple casual jobs) and campus life, sometimes mixed with the stresses of life away from the family home for the first time. Where does the seemingly minor option of attending Library orientation sessions fit in? Over many years, our student training programme concentrated just on the mechanics of using online journal indexes, and while attendances were reasonable, there were many students who never attended a session. So against this background, it was a leap of faith to develop a multi-module information literacy programme, and to expect students to attend not just one, but up to 5 sessions. Well, we built such a programme, and they came.....

During 2006 my colleague Diane Humphery and I, who were part of the team involved in the planning and delivery of UC Library's generic student training programme, drafted a modular programme aimed to deliver the broad skills required of the information literate graduate as well as incorporating teaching techniques to address adult learning styles, as part of our own studies toward a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. What started out as a theoretical model drafted as our own assessment item, gained the approval of the Information Literacy Group within UC Library and was put into practice at the start of 2007.

The programme consists of four main modules as well as separate sessions introducing *RefWorks* and *EndNote* citation management tools, plus trouble-shooting drop-in sessions and flexible one-on-one visits for Academic staff. The modules are built around the Information Literacy Standards endorsed by the Australian and New Zealand Institute for Information Literacy (ANZIL) in 2004 (Bundy, 2004) and aim to deliver "learner-centred" instruction (Crotty, 2007) to our students.

With this broad programme, along with learning the important skills needed to navigate information sources, the development of critical thinking to understand questions and evaluate information, and the correct methods of citation of those information sources, we aim to reduce the anxiety often held by first-year (and later year) students which can prevent them taking full advantage of the resources available to them. This "library anxiety" (Scoyoc A, 2003) is manifested in three ways:

- a student's perception of his/her own lack of skills (and their colleagues' perceived adequate skills)
- their embarrassment at that lack
- the fear of demonstrating that lack in front of peers

all of which combine to make students reluctant to attend library orientation sessions. Scoyoc emphasises that face-to face sessions allow students to "get to know the librarian as someone who can be a valuable resource" (Scoyoc p.331) in their ongoing study, so the importance of encouraging students to attend is multiplied.

Each module is introduced, as is usual, with an overview of the topics to be covered, as well its context in the programme as a whole. Presenters emphasise to participants that the skills they will develop will not only serve as a tool kit for Uni, but a set of skills for life.

## **THE MODULES**

### **1) Introduction to Academic Research**

This introductory session is a 50 minute demonstration, which covers concepts, skills and terminology that new undergraduates need to know, which many academic staff assume their students already understand, and many of which are not covered in any other forum.

The content includes:

- de-constructing and analysing assignment questions, to aid understanding and to develop search strategies for use with the library catalogue or journal indexes. Students identify the *directive* and *limiting* words in sample questions, to strip the question down to its *key concepts*, then brainstorm synonyms to develop search strategies.
- recognising the difference between citations for journals, monographs, chapters etc in a reading list or bibliography, and to understand the relationship between a citation, an abstract and a full text article.
- introducing concepts such as scholarly and refereed journals in comparison to popular literature, and primary versus secondary information sources
- illustrating the difference between newspapers, academic journals and popular magazines with actual examples, demonstrating the fact that online references to each of them look very similar and introducing techniques to determine the category a particular journal falls into
- beyond-basic searching of the Library catalogue

Theoretical concepts are illustrated with examples and analogies to draw on students' existing knowledge (Cooperstein & Kocevar-Weidinger, 2004), and participants are actively involved using sample reading lists, and actual copies of journals and newspapers. The session content aims to establish a good foundation for students' later research at University, and encourage recognition that these skills will carry through to the workplace.

This module reflects ANZIL Standard One, aiming to give students skills to "recognise the need for information and determine the nature and extent of the information needed".

## 2) Finding journal articles

With the explosion in numbers of databases indexing scholarly literature, new students might be forgiven for being overwhelmed with the task of choosing a database, not to mention searching for journal articles. Also at a time when most members of the new cohorts have used computers for various applications from their earliest years at school and for recreation, many "techno-savvy" students need to be convinced that their confidence in their Internet skill needs to be transformed into information literacy skills (Brown, Murphy & Nanny, 2003; Wilder, 2005). Analogies and humour are used to illustrate and enliven this module and to de-mystify the research process

Content of this session includes:

- emphasis of the difference between the information which is free on the Web and the scholarly resources available only through these subscribed databases
- recognition of the large and growing number of journals available through databases as opposed to continuing print subscriptions in our Library (mainly for those mature-age or returning students who want to go back to the comfort of browsing the shelves!)
- an overview of the techniques of truncation, wildcard searches and the role of Boolean operators (without use of that term) to refine searches
- keyword versus subject searching
- an outline of the process retrieving full text, either directly from the search database, through Article Linker software, or the possibility of tracking down a print copy
- time for supported hands-on practice

ANZIL standard Two is the foundation of this module, aiming to give participants skills to "access needed information effectively and efficiently".

## 3) Google & beyond

This module aims to reach students "where they're at" and take them further. This approach again draws students' on prior knowledge and allows them to move beyond their comfort zone.

Techniques included in this module are:

- using operators such as "define" "site" "calculator"
- advanced searching techniques, such as limiting domains, publication dates
- searching Google News & Google Images
- using "bogus" sites to demonstrate the pitfalls of Internet searching
- evaluating websites
- using Google Scholar, setting preferences, and using "Cited by"
- exporting results to bibliographic management software
- setting up alerts, and other Google accounts

Along with the broader attribute of ICT literacy, this module addresses ANZIL Standard Three, developing skills to "evaluate information and its sources critically".

#### 4) Citations and bibliographies

In second semester 2007, the title of this module has been changed to **Using references effectively** to more accurately reflect current terminology. This module has been developed jointly between the Library and UC's Academic Skills Program (ASP) in a valuable and innovative collaboration.

The Academic Skills Program is part of UC's Division of Learning & Teaching and provides information and support in learning skills such as making the most of lectures and tutorials, researching for assignments, working in groups, giving an oral presentation, writing assignments, and coping with exams, as well as referencing, the use of grammar and types of assignment writing.

This Library module covers:

- the concept of writer's "voice"
- plagiarism, and the legal & ethical reasons for avoiding it
- techniques for avoiding plagiarism: effective note-taking, paraphrasing, direct quotes
- the need to comply with copyright, intellectual property and privacy laws
- effective essay construction
- the basics of correct citation

The ability to "classify, store, manipulate and redraft information collected or generated" is outlined in ANZIL Standard Four, and addressed via this module as well as the sessions covering *RefWorks* and *EndNote* bibliographic management tools. This module also addresses Standard Six which aims to give participants an understanding of "cultural, economic, legal and social issues surrounding the use of information" as well as the legal and ethical use of information.

#### **OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE TRAINING PROGRAMME**

##### ***RefWorks* and *EndNote***

At UC *EndNote* has been available for a number of years, and has been mainly taken up by post-graduate students. With the introduction of *RefWorks* in 2006 we have seen a large uptake of this web-based product by undergraduates as well. Introductory sessions in both products are offered in early weeks of semester, basic *RefWorks* sessions continue all semester, and more advanced sessions for both products are available on request.

##### **Trouble-shooting for research & writing**

These weekly drop-in sessions were introduced in 2006 and immediately proved popular. They are presented from week 6 onward, for the remainder of each semester. They were the first collaboration between the Library and Academic Skills Program (ASP), providing support to students in any aspect of their research or writing. Students may drop in for as long or as little time as they need of the two-hour session for assistance from either of the two staff members on duty.

The range of questions presented has included:

- analysis of essay questions (most common)
- specific difficulty with a particular database
- tracking down full text
- general introduction to the process of finding journal articles

- guidance with essay writing

These sessions were promoted with the phrase "If we don't know the answers, we'll know who does" recognising that students often don't easily see why different types of information are the responsibility of different areas in the University. They just want their question answered!

We found a great spin-off off these sessions was the benefit to staff of both Library and ASP. Staff members enjoyed the collaboration and developed an increased awareness and knowledge of the other area. Also many students have followed up their Trouble-shooting session by further appointments with ASP, and uptake of ASP's Grammar and Writing programmes. The range of questions regarding reference lists and citation styles we handled in Trouble shooting sessions influenced much of the content of our new module "Using References Effectively".

### **Librarians on call**

This element of our training programme was developed separately to our other modules, acknowledging that academic staff may have limited time to keep on top the changes and growth in Library resources, and recognising the effectiveness of a trickle down effect of awareness and enthusiasm from lecturers and tutors to their students (Godwin, 2005). Librarians are available to give an update on Library resources at almost any time of the year, visiting academic staff at their own desk and at their convenience. Librarians will take the opportunity to promote Library services, new resources and (importantly) to encourage the member of academic staff to get their reading lists in to us early in semester!

ANZIL Standard Seven "recognises that lifelong learning and participative citizenship requires information literacy" and the aim at UC Library is to promote the significance and value of information literacy in the social, political and cultural life of the individual, the University and the wider community through the provision and promotion of library services and training programmes to not only students, but staff and alumni as well.

### **PROMOTION**

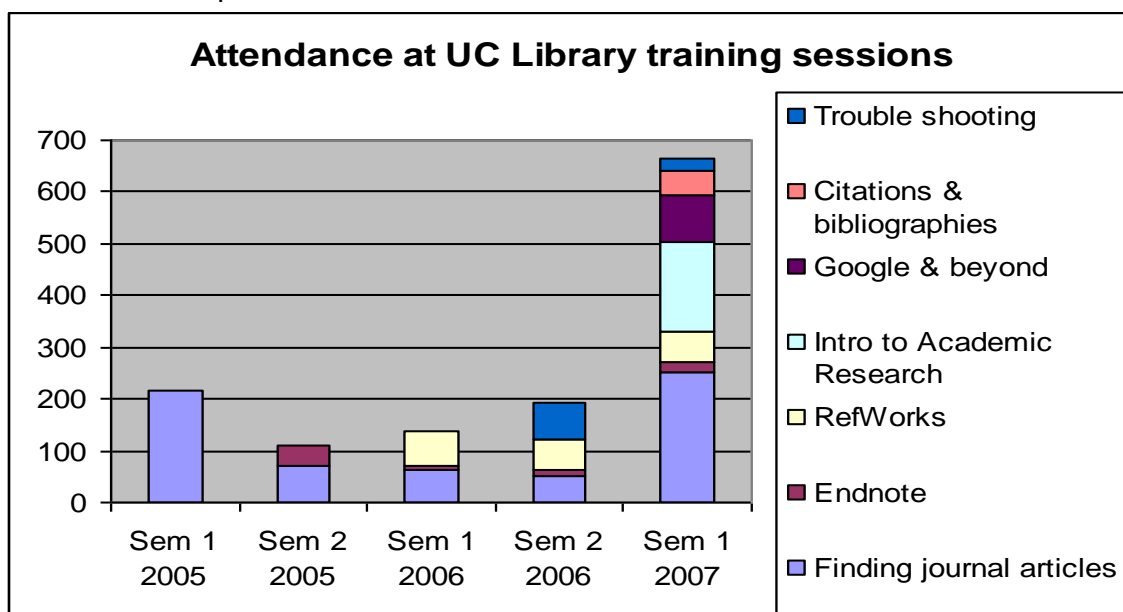
After years of producing adequate but very "home-made" posters and fliers within the Library, in 2007 Library Management was able to provide a budget to produce a modest but glossy, full-colour booklet and flier, copies of which were distributed widely to academic staff and included in new students' Orientation show bags. Two series of posters targeted the students and staff separately, asking students did they want to "get better marks", "save time" or "save money" and staff if they were "tired of marking essays which just cite internet sources" or "worried that students don't understand plagiarism". These posters were displayed liberally around campus in appropriate places for the target audience. All-staff emails from the University Librarian were sent before semester started and again in the early weeks, and an all-student email was distributed by Student Administration. A detailed programme is available on our web page, with details of session content and timetable for each week. In addition, the week's programme is posted in the Library and each day a notice at

the Library entrance lists training sessions to be presented that day. Every session is announced over the Library PA system 15 minutes before the session starts.

Participant feedback indicates that the Library noticeboard and webpage are the most common sources where students find out about the sessions, with our brochure, the PA announcements and word of mouth following in roughly equal second.

## RESULTS

The statistics speak for themselves:



	Sem 1 2005	Sem 2 2005	Sem 1 2006	Sem 2 2006	Sem 1 2007
Finding journal articles	218	71	64	52	251
Endnote		38	6	11	19
RefWorks			67	57	62
Intro to Academic Research					170
Google & beyond					93
Citations & bibliographies					46
Trouble shooting				72	24
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>665</b>

In Semester 1 2007, the total number of students attending our training sessions tripled that of the previous semester, and increased hugely the numbers in the previous 2 years. Across the modules 54 % of participants indicate that they are first year students and 22% are in their first year of post-graduate study, and over 65% have attended more than one module. With a head count of new

students in semester 1 2007 of just over 3,000, we have reached somewhere between 5 & 10% of those new students in their first year.

I fear we'll never stop hearing "I'm in third year and this is the first time I've been to the library", but if we can increase the proportion of the new cohort each semester we will be well on our way to equipping most of our students with information literacy skills which will serve them well throughout their University studies, for their workplace and for lifelong learning.

Now we face the next challenge of measuring the impact of our programme, and deciding how best to do this.

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