BEHIND THE BOOKSHELVES – STOCKTAKE WITH TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract

The University of Melbourne Baillieu Library stocktake was undertaken in 2012. There had been no systematic stocktake of the collection in around 20 years, as there had been many additions, relocations and moves so for the first time the project team used new technology to increase accuracy and efficiency. The 2012 stocktake was a major project for the Library and included the scanning of over 328,000 items, trialling new web based technology and also developing a framework for undertaking future stocktaking activities. The stocktake team was nominated and awarded a Staff Excellence Award 2012 for their outstanding contribution to the Library.

In this paper I will be discussing the benefits of the stocktake including providing information about the methodology that was used. Some of the benefits incorporated better access to collections, more efficient services to students and staff, increased accuracy of the Library collections, barcode replacements with the aim of increasing self checkout to 90% and the use of the real-time Circa software by Innovative Interfaces. Users of the library catalogue are always quick to point out when the catalogue says an item should be on the shelves and isn’t, this of course is frustrating for everyone. An accurate stocktake ensures that items are labelled correctly and housed in the appropriate collection, which assists accessibility. In the past stocktaking was a very tedious and time consuming project including creating, printing and checking lists and then downloading the results. In conjunction with discussing the benefits I will provide statistical information and results, including the various housekeeping tasks that are still being performed.
Introduction

The University of Melbourne Library comprises twelve branch libraries situated across a number of campuses including Parkville, Southbank, Burnley, Creswick and Werribee.

The collections from all of these libraries contain approximately four million items in total.

The University’s largest and busiest library branch, the Baillieu Library, is located at the Parkville campus. The Baillieu Library houses around 380,000 items in its general collection and handles around 40% of all University Library enquiries and book loans. In the last five years, there has been a strong focus on redesigning services, spaces and collections to improve the student experience. The ground floor has been recently refurbished and the Library has implemented a new service model in this area.

Successive InSync client satisfaction surveys have revealed issues with students not being able to locate items on the shelves. In response to this feedback, the Library has embarked on a number of collection projects throughout 2012, including large collection relocation and integration projects to reduce the complexity of the Library’s collection.

However, these moves did not completely address the issue of inaccurate catalogue records, or the issues of items that had been shelved in the wrong location or that were missing from the Library entirely – both of which impact significantly on the ability of clients to access Library material. It was noted that there had been no systematic stocktake of the Baillieu in over twenty years, so in response to client feedback, a decision was made - “let’s have a stocktake!”

The chief aim of the stocktake project was to ensure that the catalogue accurately reflected the collection, as well as to ensure that material was shelved in order, to reduce the frustration of library clients. Stocktaking can be a very tedious and time consuming process involving the manual creation, printing and checking of lists. However, in collaboration with the Library Systems team, we decided to trial a new methodology to improve the efficiency of the process.

This paper will outline the stocktaking project that was undertaken between June and October of 2012, and illustrate the ways in which using new web based technology improved the efficiency and effectiveness of the process. It will also outline the other benefits of the project, including the development of a new framework for undertaking future stocktaking activities. Finally, it will discuss the other remedial collection work that was completed as part of the project, including the addition of new Dewey decimal classification number labels and re-barcoding, which led to improved access to literature collections and more efficient collection management.

The Baillieu Library stocktake project team was one of the first in Australia and the first in Victoria to use the Innovative Interfaces product “Circa” to run the stocktake. This meant the team was been able to make real time updates on the catalogue as they scan.
Project Team

The Project Team was comprised of three sub-groups of current Library Staff members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Team sub-groups</th>
<th>Team membership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Library Systems Team</td>
<td>Team Leader, Innopac/Millennium Coordinator, Library Systems Team member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts Team</td>
<td>Senior Client Services Librarian, the Service Supervision Librarian, Senior Library Service Officer, a Library Cadet and the Arts Librarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stocktake Team</td>
<td>Student Library Assistants and other casuals</td>
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The Library Systems team ran and updated list of records, provided Millennium statistics, supported Circa software, and liaised with Innovative Interfaces and ITS as required. These tasks required approximately seven hours of staffing per week.

The Arts Team were involved in training casuals, organizing rosters, uploading statistics, writing procedures, troubleshooting and liaising with system staff.

The Stocktake Team consisted of a roster of two to three teams working simultaneously throughout the day. Two staff on each team were required to share scanning/workstation monitoring duties, i.e. one person would scan while the other would monitor Circa and then the duties were swapped at the end of each bay. There were two shifts per day, 9am-12pm and 1-4pm. Each shift was three hours long and each team averaged 6,000 items per week. Statistics were recorded for reporting. There were weekly meetings of the Project Team to review statistics, discuss issues and any system errors and if needed, review procedures.

Circa

Circa is a module of the Millennium system, a library management system, from Innovative Interfaces which is accessed via a web browser and can communicate in real time with the Millennium database. It can create a virtual shelf list as staff scan the shelves and it identifies items which should not be on the shelf in the particular call number range, e.g. items with statuses as missing, billed, on loan or overdue, as well as items which belong in a different part of the collection or a different branch.

As you scan the barcodes of each item on the shelf into Circa, it checks the item in Millennium, and if you scan an item which is not expected to be on the shelf, Circa will alert you. It allows staff to correct these errors as they go, with only minimal follow up work later. It also records in each item the date it was inventoried. Probably Circa’s greatest advantage is that it eliminates any need to compile, print and annotate paper lists of items for stocktaking.

To run Circa, each team used a 10” netbook with Wi-Fi for accessing the network, a barcode scanner, a mouse, a nonslip mat and a flatbed trolley. See Figure 1 below.
Figure 1 - Example of stocktaking mobile work station

Procedures

This is an example of the Circa home screen.

When Inventory Control is clicked on another window appears, Please scan item barcode.

See Figure 2 below

Figure 2
The details of the title, barcode, call number, status, location, message, format and type of item is listed and the option of yes or no, appears, so the staff member will action either yes or no.

See Figure 3 below

![Figure 3](image)

If the item is missing, the same information appears but in the status field the words ‘m missing’ will appear, the staff member is given the option to submit or cancel.

See Figure 4 below

![Figure 4](image)
If a barcode has been scanned successfully, a window asking to update status will appear.

See Figure 5 below

![Figure 5](image_url)

**Figure 5**

Circa will also alert you if the barcode is not in Millennium and the book can then be put aside for re-cataloguing and updating the barcode.

See Figure 6 below

![Figure 6](image_url)

**Figure 6**
Whenever Circa scans an item it records the date in the item INVENTORY DATE field in the Millennium Circulation module.

See Figure 7 below

Figure 7

Circa can also create a virtual shelf list, which allows staff to identify items out of sequence.

The shelf list function begins by telling staff which range they have scanned.

See Figure 8 below

Figure 8
Circa can give a summary of what has been found within the range, e.g. on shelf and in order, out on loan, out of order, missing etc.

See Figure 9 below

**Figure 9**

At this point staff can investigate the specific items reported as out of order or out of range.

Also the staff can use the information displayed here to find the item on the shelf and take action.

See Figure 10 below
Figure 10
If the item is busy that is being scanned in, the following window appears.

See Figure 11 below

![Figure 11](image1.png)

Figure 11

Circa indicates if the item that is being scanned is not on the shelf and the status can be altered accordingly.

See Figure 12 below

![Figure 12](image2.png)
Another function of Circa, is that if items are out of order on the shelf, the following status is shown. This item was put aside and shelved in the correct spot at a later time.

See Figure 13 below

![Image](image.png)

Figure 13

Results

As with any new technology, there were a number of issues and problems with Circa which had to be worked through during the project. These included patchy Wi-Fi, which created difficulty in accessing Circa itself, and complex and high traffic collections shelved in multiple locations. All procedures needed to be very clear and detailed, and all the processes needed vigilance by staff, which is one reason why we had 2 staff in each stocktake team. Also a few staff members from the Arts team would always be available for assistance if needed including walking around in the stocktake area to answer any questions on each shift. Staff identified issues with the procedures, including a lack of clarity on how to handle items that were on the shelf with non-available status, and those which were not on shelf but known to be elsewhere.

Each team kept very detailed statistics in a folder with daily statistics of each shift worked and these were collated on a weekly basis in a spread sheet, using Google Docs. Library systems also ran lists on Millennium to capture overall activity and results.

Overall statistics, see Figure 14 below
Conclusion

The major benefits of the Baillieu Library General Collection stocktake were:

1. Improved and more efficient services to students and staff of the university.

2. More accurate library holdings of the Baillieu Library general collections in the online catalogue.

3. Improved use of self-checkout machines through replacing old barcodes. Historically the barcodes were placed inside the back cover of each book. In order for books to be easily scanned on the self-check out machines, barcodes needed to be placed on the back of each book in a certain position.

4. Relabelling in the areas that were scanned has improved the speed and accuracy of shelving as a large amount of books had very old and illegible spine labels.

This project proved to be successful due to the equipment that was used (and the physical setup which worked well), the clear written policies and procedures (which covered most scenarios), our very vigilant staff, and the support and monitoring from our Library Systems team.

The Library Systems team also demonstrated a high degree of innovation and flexibility, always finding solutions to technical issues and ensuring that the stocktake ran as efficiently and effectively as possible. It was a continuous learning experience, with new skills and knowledge being developed. These can now be utilized in other branches of the University Library. In the future, other stocktake teams will benefit from knowing the requirements of such a project, including software, equipment, staffing, procedures for the physical stocktake, statistics collection, materials processing and Millennium updates.
In concluding, the benefits of all the hard, extensive work behind the book shelves is that the Baillieu Library clientele has better access to the collections and a more accurate Library catalogue. As every book in the stocktake area that was scanned is now catalogued correctly and features a better barcode, this has led to increased usage of self-checkout units. The Baillieu Library has automated book returns, automated book sorters and self-checkout units, all of which will be assisted by this project we completed.

**Acknowledgements**

Sabina Robertson, Bruce Eames and Jane Miller.

I would also like to thank The University of Melbourne for giving me the opportunity to participate in the Symposium.