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One Size doesn't fit all? Harnessing multiple assessment frameworks to build the Value proposition for the organisation.

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Abstract

The Macquarie University Library quality framework was developed in 2007 and consists of a biennial client survey, a cycle of service improvement reviews and the ongoing review and assessment of statistical data. Whilst these mechanisms do provide us with essential evidence they aren't capturing the value proposition that underpins the story of the Library. This proposition needs to be able to adapt to multiple audiences from communicating with our clients to presenting our strategic vision to the University.

The opening of our new Library brings an ideal opportunity to review our assessment approaches in order to enhance our value proposition for the organisation. In July 2011 we moved to our new Library and the last 6 months of 2011 were focused on gathering information from our clients relating to their impressions and experiences of the new spaces and service provision. We have seen a significant increase in the physical and virtual use of our spaces, resources and services and yet our client surveys still evidenced the same feedback we have been receiving for the past 5 years – not enough power points and more quiet study spaces! Considering that we have doubled the access to seating, computers and power points what assessment measures do we need to engage that will bring a more comprehensive picture of our value and highlight the key improvement areas that will ensure we are providing the services and support our clients require.

In 2012 the Library will undergo a review as part of the University's Quality Enhancement framework. Within the broad parameters of the review there will be a specific focus on the "development of metrics around outcomes measures to demonstrate fitness for purpose, particularly in relation to benchmarking nationally and internationally". An integral part of this will be identifying opportunities to integrate the Library into University assessment. Macquarie University has taken the lead role in the development of a national Teaching Standards Framework and the University Librarian participated in this development by drafting an initial evidence matrix to be used to assess Library Resource provision within this framework.

This paper will report on the progress of the Library Review, the integration of Library assessment in the Teaching Standards Framework and identify the tools and methods that will form our Library Quality Framework from 2013.

Context

In August 2011 Macquarie University opened the doors on a new \$100 million Library. This is the first new University Library building in Australia for some years and incorporates the first automated retrieval system in the southern hemisphere.

Since opening we have seen a significant increase in the physical and virtual use of our spaces, resources and services and yet our client survey, carried out in October 2011, reflected the same issues of space and access to computers that have been common to all previous surveys, not providing any broader insights into client expectations and value impact. Our challenge is to gain a more comprehensive picture of our value to highlight the key improvement areas that will ensure we are providing the services and support our clients require.

In 2012 Macquarie University Library commenced a program of review in relation to our performance. The aim is not only to review our current practice but to identify the models, methodologies and tools that will underpin the analysis processes and evidence the value we bring to the University's research, teaching and learning goals. This will not be achieved in a year but acknowledges a commitment to embedding the Library in University practice and aims to ensure that any value is expressed in the sense of value to our clients and the institution.

Literature review

How do we define value in a sector that openly declares this to be a challenging goal? It is interesting to note that this debate is not new or recent. In 1999 Judith Broady-Preston and Hugh Preston¹ noted that 'to suggest that the main impetus for quality assessment in academic libraries is a recent, governmentally driven phenomenon is misleading. With varying degrees of enthusiasm, librarians have, over the years, attempted to measure or demonstrate the "quality" of the service they provide.' What was evident then and remains relevant now, is that whilst libraries have a sound understanding of inputs and outputs, undertake regular and relevant client satisfaction surveys and can regularly review work practice and service delivery, there is little understanding of the 'impact' of the services and resources they provide to their clients.

Joseph R Matthews² observed that 'despite a fairly lengthy history of inquiry, much confusion exists about the concept of organizational effectiveness'. He goes on to identify conceptual challenges around what to measure rather than how and then how to link these assessment factors to the goals, objectives and functions of the organisation. He notes that 'clearly the definition of effectiveness is going to be multidimensional, since a single perspective is not going to be able to capture the effectiveness of any organization.'

A 2012 research project commissioned by SAGE³ to investigate the value of academic libraries for teaching and research staff found 'the academic library community has been dealing with the issue of how best to demonstrate its value for years, especially value to students. Yet although a good deal of evidence is collected, much of this is evidence of activity rather than evidence of value and impact, especially value to and impact on teaching and research staff.'

All of this confirms Megan Oakleaf's⁴ findings in her 2010 review of the value of academic libraries. The review identified that libraries, whilst engaged in assessment practice, were not as successful in articulating their impact on and contribution to organisational goals. The research included an in-depth analysis of library assessment literature and the development of a series of steps that can be used by academic libraries check their progress towards building the value proposition and integrating this successfully into the institutions agenda. In an interview with the Chronicle of Higher Education, Lisa Janicke Hinchliffe⁵, president of the Association of College and Research Libraries [ACRL], stated that the report "really does lay out the framework of the research agenda and the questions we need to answer as a profession..... Sometimes we can be so focused internally on our library goals that we don't take the time to reflect how those connect to institutional goals, and that's really where our accountability and our responsibility lie"

Step 1: Strategic Directions

Macquarie University has a clearly articulated strategy for the next two years. The vision is for the University to be ranked among the top eight research-intensive universities in Australia and among the top 200 in the world by age 50 (in 2014), with significant progress being made towards this goal since 2006. In the 2010 *Excellence in Research for Australia* (ERA) assessment, 80 per cent of Macquarie's research activity was rated as performing at world standard or higher. During 2012, the QS 'Top 50 Under 50' ranked Macquarie 16th in the world, while the Times Higher Education '100 Under 50' rating placed Macquarie at joint-33rd globally. The Academic Plan states Macquarie's aim to make a difference through excellent research, high quality teaching and a transformative student experience.

Macquarie University Library's vision is to be a leader in the provision of information resources and services to enable Macquarie University to achieve its aims with the mission being to provide a world-class information environment for Macquarie University. The Library's strategic aims are to partner with our community to:

- Provide access to high quality information resources that support world-class research and research-enhanced teaching
- Deliver excellent, client-centred services that help build graduate capabilities, research capacity, teaching excellence and community engagement
- Provide high quality, safe and inclusive informal learning environments to support and to recognise research, learning, teaching and community engagement.

The University Academic Plan and the Library Strategic Aims are current to 2014. We welcomed a new Vice-Chancellor in September 2012 who will begin the strategic planning process for 2014 and beyond. This new strategy will then inform the development of new University level and Library plans. The Library, however, has identified that it may be more useful for our community and for our planning if we had more explicit strategies for Library support for research (in terms of the research cycle) and for learning and teaching (in terms of workflows and graduate capabilities). First drafts of the Research Support framework and the Learning and Teaching Support framework have been developed. These provide the context, proposed strategies and indicative performance indicators that will be used to inform the current fine-tuning of strategy, structure and roles.

Whilst the Library works towards the realisation of these strategies, planning for, and moving to, the new Library has occupied much of the time for a significant number of Library staff for most of the five year period from 2006 to 2011. While this has been a significant achievement, as evidenced by increased usage and the use of the Library in marketing Macquarie as the "modern university", the focus on the building project has meant that attention now needs to be given to other strategies and projects to ensure that we successfully develop and deliver services, resources and support to our clients.

Step 2 - Implementing Quality @ Macquarie University Library

Macquarie University Library has a long commitment to quality practice, beginning with the implementation of Total Quality Service (TQS) in 1994. Through an iterative process we have developed our current quality framework which is based on Macquarie University's Quality Enhancement model. The framework focuses on service improvement, with specific aims encapsulated in annual department, team and individual development plans. The framework provides a methodology for evaluating the quality of our services by reviewing what we do, why we do it, how we do it and, most importantly, how we know we are doing it well. However, whilst the framework is built on a continuous cycle of improvement it is still focused on inputs and outputs rather than outcomes related to learning, teaching and research.

At a University level, validation of the Library's quality approach is evidenced in the quality audits completed in 2003 and 2009 by the Australian Universities Quality Agency [AUQA]. Within the portfolio of evidence and audit reports there were multiple references to the Library's effective contribution to quality improvement initiatives and benchmarking including:

- The Library's support for open access and research
- Partnerships with information technology and academic support services
- excellence in the provision of a 24x7 IT helpdesk in conjunction with international partners
- numerous and effective mechanisms for linking closely with academic staff and students, and for identifying improvement opportunities.

For six years the library has had dedicated planning and evaluation responsibilities assigned to a role or team, as well as a governance framework that positions quality in relation to service development, delivery and continuous improvement. In October 2012 the Library is undergoing a five year external quality review which is a requirement under the University's quality model. It is expected that this review will provide us with perspectives to inform our strategic planning and further develop our quality enhancement activities.

For some years we have also measured achievements through the standardised collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data includes centralised statistical collection and reporting, annual statistics reported in the Library Annual Report, and the Australia- and New Zealand- wide Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL) annual statistical collection. Qualitative data includes client feedback, survey results and comments and focus group input.

The Library utilises a number of quality methodologies, including a modified version of PRINCE2 for project management, the IT Infrastructure Library [ITIL] methodology for IT service delivery and an internally developed service review methodology that provides an objective and independent method for auditing what is being offered or undertaken by each Department across the Library. This range of quality approaches provides us with quantitative data and methodologies but does not provide a full picture of the value of the Library to our clients.

External assessment - Library Review 2012

The 2012 Library Review comes at a time when we are facing significant leadership changes. Along with the commencement of the new Vice Chancellor our University Librarian will be retiring at the end of 2012 after ten years in the role. This review will provide us with the opportunity to document the current situation, analyse gaps and propose areas of strategic focus for the next three-to-five years. At the time of writing, we have completed a self-evaluation report which has been provided to the Review panel members before they arrive onsite to undertake a series of interviews with key Library staff, academics and students. The self-evaluation report is a comprehensive, evidence-driven document that demonstrates progress against Library and University goals and aims to evaluate processes as well as outcomes. The findings and recommendations of the review panel will be of value both for the new Vice-Chancellor and as significant input into the strategic planning that our new University Librarian will lead.

The self-evaluation report has made reference to Megan Oakleaf's ten research areas that relate to understanding the contribution made by the library to achieving institutional outcomes and summarises the key issues for Macquarie University Library:

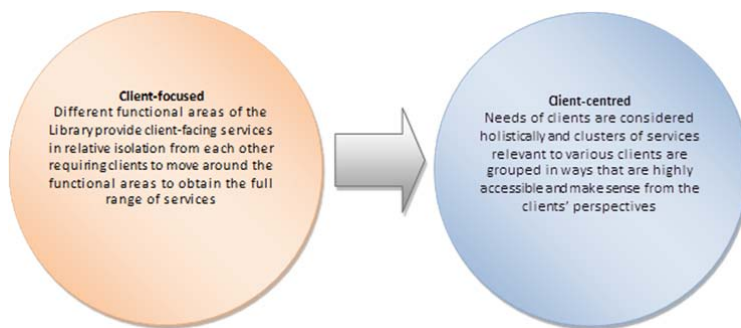
'Like many academic libraries we are now beginning to develop a more strategic approach to evaluation that seeks to determine the Library's value and impact in the context of the mission of the University – to try to identify the ways in which our services contribute to academic, teaching and research outcomes [as] most of the measures and benchmarking done by libraries to date is about inputs and activity, not about outcomes'⁶

Step 3 Putting quality into practice: Client Centred Services and Strategies

In 2010 – 2011, as part of planning the move to our new Library, we undertook to develop a service philosophy and model to underpin future service strategies, plans and assessment. Through an environmental scan, staff focus groups, working parties and visits to other libraries and service organisations we identified five principles which form the basis of our service philosophy:

- a holistic approach to clients and their needs
- a welcoming, client-centred environment
- empowering clients through seamless self service
- learning together – clients and library staff sharing a learning partnership
- excellence in quality and innovation

While the Library's long involvement in quality improvement approaches had given us a client focus, the shift proposed by these principles was that we become client-centred. Where we had previously organised and delivered services in a library-centric manner, we now needed to group services in a way that made sense from the client point of view:



Once established, the service philosophy informed the development of a set of principles for service delivery:

- maximisation of unmediated access to services and resources
- balance maintained at service points between minimisation of referral and responsible utilisation of resources
- responsiveness to cyclical demand; flexibility and mobility of staffing resources
- service solutions that are sustainable and scalable
- technology is used to benefit people
- continuous review, evaluation and improvement of services is conducted in collaboration with clients
- decisions are based on evidence.

Since 2006 we have included client centred measures of success as a key component of our strategic planning. The Library action plan each year includes measures that represent the impact of our services from the clients' perspective. Thus, instead of measuring, for example, how many document supply requests are processed, we measure how quickly those requests are despatched or received, and develop strategies to continually improve our performance. Obviously this is still a measure of activity but it is a step in shifting our perception towards measuring services from the clients' point of view and to measuring outcomes rather than outputs..

To further embed the quality principles, in the first half of 2012, we undertook a qualitative review and assessment of Library services and client needs. The outcomes from this review have now been used to develop a series of service strategies and to design the structure and roles within our Library Services department that allows us to best respond to these needs.

The Review sought input from Library staff and clients on a range of issues, including:

- Client's motivation for using the Library's services
- The value they place on Library services
- Perceived gaps in service provision

Staff consultation was internally facilitated and involved a large number of focus group sessions. An external consultant was engaged to carry out the client consultation through a program of interviews with Associate Deans in each faculty. This consultant also assisted in the design of client focus groups and with overall analysis of the data collected.

Whilst there were a number of practical recommendations – longer opening hours, help desks on each floor of the Library, more power points and quiet seating areas - this review was not focused on the building. Instead the findings and recommendations have informed the development of a set of service strategies that aim to focus Library expertise and capability on meeting the needs of the clients. Three key areas of strategic focus emerged:

- Research support
- Collection development and management
- Academic literacy

A common theme from both staff and clients was the need for the Library to be more attuned to the needs of specific client groups and to tailor services accordingly. In response to the review and as part of designing a new departmental structure the Library has developed a set of service strategies that will inform the planning from 2013 onwards. These strategies aim to support research, learning and teaching through the development of a service mix that is responsive to, and centred around client needs and expectations. Building partnerships and relationships is critical to success as is developing client oriented access to resources that meet specific needs. The strategies will also contribute to the development of an assessment framework that addresses both quantitative and qualitative approaches to articulating our value.

Supporting Research – the Library strategy

With the University's research agenda aimed at 'growing' researchers through research pathways, starting at undergraduate level, the Library has been developing a Research Support strategy that aims to integrate Library support into the research workflow and position the Library as a consultant partner in research programs.

With many researchers now accessing a virtual library and librarians striving to make access to collections and services quick, seamless and easy the library has become increasingly invisible to researchers. The research support strategy focuses on raising awareness of Library support beyond that of 'collection managers' and will highlight the value of the library's collection and physical space in supporting the recruitment and retention of researchers. It will also communicate the availability of Library staff, with specialist skills, who can enhance and support research on an 'as needs' basis and embed this within the researcher's environment and workflow.

To achieve this we require a detailed understanding of researchers' needs and behaviours, a redefinition of library roles to meet the current and future needs of researchers and the development of new models of support with a greater emphasis on consultancy and partnerships. Building strong relationships with research groups and support units to provide integrated support for researchers and research students at all stages of the research workflow will be critical to success as will the development of performance measures for the Library that can demonstrate the impact and value of library services on research quality.

Supporting Teaching & learning – the Library strategy

In response to Australian government initiatives, the University's strategies, a new online learning environment, trends in learning and teaching and the changing expectations of new generation learners, the Library has developed a Learning and Teaching Support Strategy. The Strategy supports the development of programs linked to graduate capabilities, providing a client-centred approach to supporting learning and teaching which enhances the learners' experience.

The Library's Learning and Teaching Support Strategy will develop partnerships within the University to provide integrated support for teachers and learners, provide tailored services to ensure the needs of differing client groups are met, support the development of skills for lifelong learning and ensure quality resources are available to meet learning and teaching needs. Like the Research Support Strategy, clearly articulated performance indicators will measure the outcomes of the implementation of the strategy and indicate areas for further development and improvement.

Step 4 - Linking the Library to University strategies, goals and outcomes

At Macquarie we are increasingly using a system of frameworks to underpin and connect the strategies and plans that guide our operations, as well as seeking to embed the library in University-wide strategies and frameworks. Recent work has included contributing to the development of evidence measures for the new national Teaching Standards Framework. Currently in the early stages of development, this will provide us with a model for how the Library might measure contribution to teaching quality and student outcomes.

Teaching Standards Framework

The Teaching Standards Framework ⁷ is a Macquarie University initiative led by Macquarie in partnership with nine other Universities. The Framework aims to develop a tool that can be used by universities to survey their processes for ensuring teaching quality and participate in benchmarking reports. A key component of the standards is a set of criteria that can be used to assess performance data coming from common evaluative mechanisms in use in most universities. These include course evaluation questionnaires, student experience surveys, and employer feedback and the outcome will be the ability to continually review and improve the quality of learning and teaching.

The research undertaken as part of this project identified that "different quantitative measures focus on specific things – student experience and satisfaction; assessment and exit performance and skills of graduates as they enter the workforcewhat gets omitted from such data are the key principles of educational value [for example, life-long learning and social inclusion] recognised by government, academics and students alike as among the core missions of tertiary education." ⁷ Teaching and learning evaluation mirrors the challenges that University libraries face in the context of measuring impact and articulating value.

The Teaching Standards Framework is built around six standards across three themes: Teaching, Learning Environment and Curriculum. These are further broken down into seven areas of focus covering: management responsibilities, planning, resources, policies and procedures, practices, outcomes, monitoring and evaluation. These areas include:

Teaching	
Standard 1	The institution's teaching structures ensure quality learning outcomes
Standard 2	The institution's teaching practices ensure a quality student learning experience
Learning Environment	
Standard 3	The institution's services and resources enable quality learning outcomes
Standard 4	The institution's services and resources enable a quality student learning experience

Curriculum	
Standard 5	The institution ensures that the curriculum is current, academically robust and rigorous
Standard 6	The institution ensures that curriculum content and assessment practices produce quality learning outcomes

The Library participated in this project by testing the criteria and performance indicators relevant to the Library's contribution to teaching quality across all seven focus areas of the Learning Environment theme. This was achieved by establishing an Evidence Guide that could be used to document performance against each of the specified indicators and by providing some commentary on the indicators themselves, including possible metrics and sources of evidence.

The work completed to date has been shared with other University libraries through the Council of Australian University Libraries forum. As the Teaching Standards framework has now been adopted nationally and an online tool is being developed, the next step for the Library will be to partner with relevant internal units to improve student feedback options in order to better assess the impact of Library support in the area of information resources provision for Units.

Next Steps – building our Value Proposition

At the beginning of 2012 the Library aimed to review our quality enhancement frameworks, identify the ways in which we could improve our performance assessment and identify the specific frameworks, tools and /or methodologies that would support our strategic directions. We are, however, part of a larger organisation and in March 2012 the University launched a long term restructuring program that aims to enhance the student experience through connected services and efficient utilisation of resources. An unplanned consequence of this program has been the impact on the Library and in particular on our support services including quality and planning.

Ultimately the restructuring program will provide opportunities to identify and adopt a common service improvement model across the service support areas of the University. In the meantime our original plans have been modified and we are contributing to quality directions from a University-wide perspective. This is a benefit as it will develop a far more sustainable approach to quality and operational excellence, however in the short term, we can no longer guarantee our ability to ensure quality is built into all our services??

Despite these challenges our review of current practice is well underway. Our self-assessment has confirmed that our measures are largely focused on inputs, activities and usage, rather than outcomes and given Macquarie's research aspirations, we need to expand our assessment in relation to impact and consider opportunities for benchmarking with relevant libraries across Australia and overseas. The Research Support strategy, the Learning and Teaching Support strategy and the Teaching Standards Framework are key strategies that will cumulatively contribute to demonstrating library impact on student learning and ultimately articulate the value proposition for the organisation.

Within this environment what direction can we take in 2013? Based on the work to date we believe there is the capacity to continue our journey to building our value proposition, enhancing our quality practice and improving our capacity to measure value and impact. We have identified the following key actions for 2013, bearing in mind that a new University Librarian will influence the direction of this plan:

1. Participation in the CAUL national client satisfaction survey to allow for benchmarking against the results of the 2011 survey that took place after we moved to our new Library
2. Identify and utilise other tools that can provide us with international benchmarking data on our service quality [eg:Libqual]

3. Self-assess against Megan Oakleaf's Academic Library Value Checklist⁸ to identify our achievements and the areas where we need to improve. Inherent in this will be the need to partner with learning and teaching groups and the University's data analysis group to position the Library as part of ongoing student assessment programs and enable the data modeling to include relevant library data. Current student evaluation tools include Macquarie University Student Experience Questionnaire (MUSEQ), Teaching Evaluation for Development Service(TEDS) and Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE)
4. Expand library impact measures in relation to the Teaching Standards Framework and further develop campus partnerships to embed these measures within relevant student surveys.

Originally we had planned to utilise the Australian Business Excellence Framework⁹ to assess our operational performance in leadership, strategy and planning, client focus, process, performance and people. The University-wide restructuring program has meant it is not viable to undertake this work until the University confirms quality directions, however we do plan to utilise the business excellence elements, noted above, to continue the self-assessment undertaken as part of the 2012 Library Review.

But perhaps success in building and articulating our value proposition relies even more on the successful engagement of staff, without which quality and assessment practice is relegated to the annual collation of quantitative data and the results of client satisfaction surveys. The importance of this is reflected in the June 2012 ACRL report 'Connect, Collaborate, and Communicate'¹⁰ which presented five recommendations for the library profession:

1. Increase librarians' understanding of library value and impact in relation to various dimensions of student learning and success
2. Articulate and promote the importance of assessment competencies necessary for documenting and communicating library impact on student learning and success.
3. Create professional development opportunities for librarians to learn how to initiate and design assessment that demonstrates the library's contributions to advancing institutional mission and strategic goals
4. Expand partnerships for assessment activities with higher education constituent groups and related stakeholders
5. Integrate the use of existing ACRL quality resources with library value initiatives.

This becomes a critical connection between the library and our clients and must underpin any steps we take to enhance our value. In August 2011 Macquarie University may have opened the doors on a new, state of the art Library but it is the steps we are now taking that will really allow us to articulate the value that we contribute the University's goals in teaching and in research. This is one journey that we share with academic libraries across the globe.

Notes

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