We're a member of the Association of Theological Booksellers too. We're the only Australian bookseller that goes, and during the conference 16 of the larger publishers give a presentation of what's new, what's coming up, anything they think theological booksellers ought to know. One publisher showed software! One! Wm B Eerdmanns, one of the fastest growing religious publishers in the world, do not have any plans for software. Publishers like Fortress have plans to make Luthers works available - the whole 55 volumes, but not in the near future. Ask me again in 10 years and we'll see where they are at.

The *New interpreter's bible* - (eventually 12 volumes) is available in bits and pieces but it's a hassle for Australians. We can supply it, but then when another volume comes out, we ask you to return it, we credit you, we send it back to Abingdon, they update it with the latest volume, we send it back to you and recharge you - too much mucking around. We'll wait until all 12 volumes are out, late 2001 and then promote it.

The software industry is moving ahead very quickly - who knows what Bill Gates has in store for us next? Books and software do have a place in the future, but neither will dominate. They'll work side by side, we'll all have jobs in 15 years, and the two things we need to remember are : computers are programmed by humans, and we all know where the 'off' button is.

Warren Schirmer
General Manager
Openbook Publishers

Mark Simpfendorfer
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Beacon Hill Books

Existing boundaries to new fields
Paper 2:

A Library of the future before its time?
The experiences of Central Queensland University Sydney International Campus Electronic Library and Resource Centre.

Jackie Slee

There has been much discussion in library literature in the last 10 years concerning the future of libraries and our profession. Information is increasingly available electronically but few have had the experience of working in a completely electronic library. Consequently little has been written concerning the everyday practice of running an electronic library. This paper presents the experiences of managing a one-person electronic library for Central Queensland University Sydney International Campus. The development of the library, its advantages and disadvantages and the key issues for the library will be discussed.

The development of the library
Central Queensland University (CQU) is a new and geographically dispersed university,

with campuses and small library collections in seven locations. It is a post-1987 institution with a present enrolment of more than 8,500 full time students. The main campus is at Rockhampton with other campuses located at Mackay, Gladstone, Bundaberg, Emerald.

In 1994 a private company in negotiation with Central Queensland University opened the CQU Sydney International Campus (SIC) with 25 overseas students. It was, and still is, a profit-making venture, aiming to fill a gap in the higher education market by catering specifically for the needs of overseas students with small classes run by professional academic staff. Students attend classes on the campus, which is located on the top two floors of the Imperial Arcade in the CBD. The hope was that the students would find the environment less intimidating than a large university because they would not be competing with Australian students who have a language advantage over them. A library was never part of the original plans for the campus. All library resources and reader education programs were to be provided by the University of New South Wales Library.

Courses offered were degrees in Business, Arts (with a tourism major) and information technology. As the campus grew an MBA, Master of Information Systems and an Arts degree with a communication major were added to the programs.

Increase in student numbers 1994-98
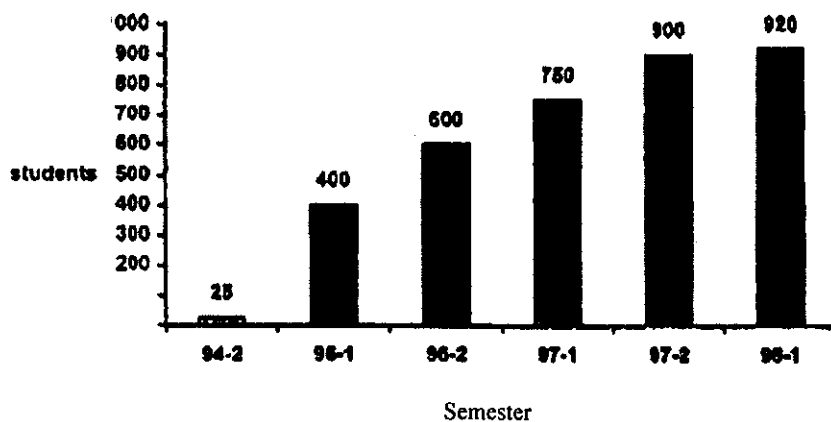
Semester

Student numbers grew each semester (see table). In January 1996, when there were 400 students, it was decided to employ a librarian on campus whose role was to provide reference assistance and reader education to students in an electronic library, supported by the printed resources of UNSW. The librarian was to be employed by the private company managing the campus, not the CQU Library. This meant that there would be no support from the main campus library - the librarian would effectively be on his or her own. There was no budget.

Electronic resources were limited to the Internet and *Business Periodicals On Disc*. There were 8 PCs in the Library plus 150 more in computer laboratories. The borrowing agreement with UNSW was maintained because the need for print resources was

recognised. Later that year, AUSTROM was introduced. Reader education was the focus of activities for that entire year.

In February 1997, the Melbourne campus opened. Because of my experiences and the obvious need for support, the Melbourne librarian was employed by CQU, giving her access to ongoing support and guidance from experienced librarians on the main campus in Rockhampton. Again it was an electronic library with printed resources supplied by the University of Melbourne. At this point there was talk of my employment being transferred to CQU, but nothing happened.

In April 1997 a survey of students was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the SIC library and of the reader education program. Over 40% of students were rarely satisfied with information found in the library but most made regular use of nearby libraries such as the State Library. Although two thirds of students applied to use the UNSW Library, 80% had not used the library because it was too far away. Two thirds said they had attended a library tutorial which featured use of catalogues and journal databases - 90% said that it had helped to some extent but their contradictory responses to other reader education questions casts doubts on this. The overwhelming response was that students just wanted books.

In hindsight this survey was perhaps a little unfair. If students had been exposed to a greater variety of electronic resources the results may have been more positive about the value of electronic resources.

In July 1997, the main library assumed responsibility for the management of the Sydney campus library and I became a CQU staff member. The range of electronic resources expanded dramatically with access to an ERL Server with *ABI/Inform* (full text business journals similar to *BPO*), *Austrom, Business Australia*, etc plus other databases such as *Firstsearch, UnCover, Current Contents, Searchbank*, Fairfax newspapers in full text, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* on disk and an electronic reserve. Most importantly from the students' perspective was the introduction of books, the recommended readings for each subject. The official line adopted was that it was still an electronic library but it was now supported by a small print collection.

The books, currently totalling approximately 800 in number, are ordered through the main library and come from the reading lists for each subject. They are sent to SIC directly from the supplier with end processing complete. The only work necessary for each one is to verify the bibliographic record and add an item screen. All books were initially on reserve and could be borrowed overnight. There were so many complaints that it was decided to allow 3 day loans after Easter this year. The addition of books has changed the focus of work in the Library. It has moved from reader education and reference assistance to predominantly circulations work. This reinforces the idea that all students want are books. As a result, a library assistant is now employed casually for 10- 20 hours per week to allow me time to prepare reader education classes, plan promotions and to familiarise myself with upcoming assignments. It has also become a more stressful environment as students begin to question the loan rules and fines.

I have a small budget of $7,000 with which to buy reference materials and additional books in high demand areas. The aim is to keep the collection small and relevant to subjects. Fines monies are also used to purchase additional items.

In first term this year, some research to investigate how international students learn to use libraries was conducted with funding from a Teaching and Learning Grant. As with the previous survey, results again are cause for some concern. They will be discussed shortly.

Advantages of the electronic library
From my experience over the last 2.5 years, there are definite advantages to an electronic library.

1.   Speed of retrieval, ease of access, precision of hits and the convenience of being able to print out full text journal articles twenty-four hours a day demonstrates electronic libraries at their best. This is the promising future that electronic libraries offer us.

2.   Less need for physical space. Compared with CQU's regional campuses in Queensland, my physical space is minuscule. The 12 PCs take up half of the library's space and six double-sided bays of books one quarter. The remaining space is devoted to the information guide display and the quiet study area.

3.   Fewer staff are required. Maintaining a book collection is a labour intensive task - ordering, cataloguing, circulation, shelving. It was easier to focus on the librarian's prime responsibility of educating users before the advent of books.

4.   Cost. With current student numbers it is cheaper to have a range of electronic resources available on campus and to pay to use the facilities of another library than to establish and maintain a 20,000 volume library.

5.   Theft was never a problem. There was no need for a security system or regular stocktakes then, as there is now. Today a stocktake is done every 6-8 weeks and 5-10 books are missing each time.

6.   The electronic setting also creates an opportunity to be proactive, to promote the library as being technologically advanced, relevant to its users and unlimited by the usual constraints of a physical space with set opening hours.

Disadvantages of the electronic library
In spite of these advantages, the library has a number of problems which have had a marked impact on its success:

1.   There is not enough quality information available electronically at present to make a fully electronic library viable. The closest example to mine of an electronic library is the Berwick campus of Monash University, It is completely electronic, however students can borrow books from the TAFE library across the road. Undergraduates' research tends to be focused on books and journal articles.

books and journal articles. Electronic journals with full text are increasingly available on databases such as *ABI/Inform* but they are very costly. Those on the WWW often are not completely full text.

2.   The distance from the Sydney Campus to the UNSW Library is the principal cause of its under-utilisation by students. The April 1997 survey confirmed this but also revealed that almost half of students who complain about this distance live within a 10km radius of UNSW. From this it can be deduced that students expect their library to be a 'one-stop shop' for information and will only use another library's facilities if located nearby. The Melbourne campus and soon-to-be-opened Brisbane campus have agreements with universities within a 5 or 10 minute walk and level of use varies accordingly. Other options have been investigated for the Sydney campus with no luck.

3.   Having all resources (journals, catalogues, newspapers, electronic reserve, etc) on each PC can be confusing for students because the distinction between each type, which was evident in print, is blurred. Students with a zero knowledge base of information resources struggle to learn the differences between each one. They search for journal articles on the WWW, statistics in journal databases, etc. Perhaps if they were familiar with the printed equivalents of many electronic resources, they would not be so frustrated when using the library.

4.   The Internet is mistakenly highly thought of as a reputable information resource. This year's research into how international students learn to use libraries shows that the majority believe the WWW to be the most reliable source of information. This is despite efforts to introduce them to a range of other more reputable sources during reader education classes each term. Sometimes the WWW is not even covered in reader education because of time constraints but the subtle message about its omission is lost on the students. A website for the campus was designed to promote the use of quality sites, but it has never been used much.

5.   International students are a difficult user group to cater for because of their passive learning style which is not always receptive to research and critical evaluation of information. As a group they do not understand the importance of information literacy. On top of this they are not an homogeneous group. Cultural differences mean that their skills and expectations vary considerably and this sometimes causes problems. Given the lack of technological development in some of the countries represented on campus, it may also be unfair to expect students to flourish in an electronic environment.

6.   By far the greatest challenge for the library has been the effort it takes to change user perceptions of what a library can be. The chief medium for this is reader education. Its success is questionable when students give their friends a tour of the campus, saying "This is the library" with a giggle behind their hands and when the most regularly asked question is, "When are we getting a library?". Verbal evidence suggests that students do not appreciate that information found

electronically is still information, the exception being the WWW. This creates a constant need to be justifying the library as a legitimate entity on campus, which can be an opportunity for promotion of the library's capabilities (if viewed positively) or just a draining experience (two and a half years' experience talking).

Issues for CQU-SIC electronic library

The following issues apply to both the Sydney and Melbourne campuses and are probably also applicable in many other settings.

1.   An electronic environment necessitates more emphasis on education, whether it be to change perceptions about what constitutes a library or to train students to be effective endusers.

   a)   Changing perceptions. Education is the acknowledged key to any sort of attitudinal change in life. The purpose of reader education on campus is to enlighten students about the world of information. If they recognise that information does not necessarily come in books, the library has some chance of success. Evidence of success is seen in students' willingness to use the library and to use a variety of information sources both here and at UNSW Library. Using these criteria, is the library successful? There is a core group of users, as most libraries have, who are largely satisfied with the library's ability to meet their information needs. This, however, is unfortunately a minority. And the resources used are limited to books and the Internet with the occasional look at journal databases.

   b)   Training students to use the electronic resources effectively. As part of enlightening them about the variety of resources, students should also have some confidence in understanding the process they must go through to find information such as identifying keywords and constructing a search statement. This has been successful in that some students are happy to search for journal articles or newspaper articles without much intervention from me, However there is still a large proportion of students who are confused by what each type of electronic resource can do and a glance at some of their searches shows that there are serious problems in the selection of keywords and the construction of a search statement. This may be because English is not their native language.

   As part of training, I am sometimes criticised for not emphasising to students that they can search all of the electronic resources in the computer laboratories or at home if they have Internet access. Because students usually need assistance to find information, it is easier to have them searching in the library where help can be offered when they scratch their heads or looking dazed.

2.   **Role of promotional activities** in maintaining the library's relevance and importance to students by keeping it visible on the campus. Reader education can be the best type of promotion, but signs, emailing all students, submitting information to the Student Association Newsletter, memos to tutors to remind

students about particular resources, etc are methods regularly used to keep students up to date with library news. Promoting the library to teaching staff and management are also essential.

Promotions have suffered in the Autumn term this year because reader education, circulation duties and training my assistant, who started work mid-term, have taken up so much time. Coincidentally this has also been the most difficult term to date for student complaints, from individuals plus the Student Association.

In consultation with Rockhampton the latest thoughts for promotions are to market the twenty-four hour searching aspect of the International Campus libraries. Considering that what students constantly demand are more books and longer opening hours for the book collection, the success of this strategy is dependent on reader education's ability to change perceptions that the Library is more than books.

3. **Importance of knowing your user group and the challenges electronic resources present them with.** In CQU-SIC's case, a fully electronic library has not been satisfactory for our users. For the reasons already outlined, I wonder if this is the right library for the wrong patrons. In a business setting where research is conducted by librarians rather than by the end users an electronic library may be perfectly acceptable.

4. **Importance of professional staff.** Reliance on electronic resources does not reduce the need for professional staff. In fact the opposite is probably true. The educational role of the librarian is heightened and reference assistance, whether it be to find information or use a particular resource, continues to be significant.

5. **Increasing student numbers make it costly to continue paying UNSW for services.** When student numbers are small, it is more economical to do so. The vision is that each CQU International campus will eventually have 4000 students. Admittedly not all students want to use the UNSW Library but in theory $60 a term for 4000 students is $240,000. Although it has not yet been discussed by management, each campus will ultimately have to have a self-sufficient library. The question is how to decide the point at which to make the change.

The Melbourne Campus Librarian and I are eagerly awaiting the Brisbane Campus Librarian commencing duties in July so we can compare experiences!

Conclusion

Electronic libraries are complex and challenging entities. The change from totally electronic to "electronic supported by printed resources" will no doubt hearten those of you who question the bandwagon approach many take to electronic information and the power of the Internet. However there is no escaping the fact that the future is electronic and this thought need not be threatening to librarians. Presently there is still a need for

printed information in universities but in 20 years' time the scenario may be quite different. Who knows how a library will be defined then?

When establishing an electronic library detailed thought must be given to what resources are suitable for users and the extent to which you will rely on the services and facilities of other nearby libraries. At an everyday level, to operate effectively consideration must be given to educational and promotional activities and to the user group being catered for. The real advantage of the SIC library is the ability to access it 24 hours a day but the hardest part of it is convincing students that it is in fact a library.

Is this a library before its time or the right library for the wrong users? The answer to those questions is probably yes, but as I constantly say to the Student Association, "If there was a cost effective and more easily managed alternative that would better service the needs of our students, don't you think we'd have done it by now?"

Based on experiences as Campus Librarian at CQU SIC between January 1996 and August 1998.
Jackie Slee is now at the Library of NRMA Investments for 12 months.

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