

Young People in the Library: Innovative Methods of Engagement

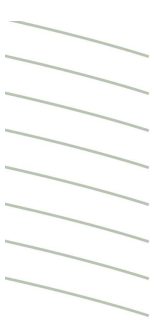
Oksana Feklistova

Abstract

What are we doing for younger users, to keep them engaged in the library? What use is our library making of mobile technology? How are we changing the space in the library to make it more interactive or to accommodate the way that young people want to learn or study? This talk and video show how we are bringing the younger, 'always on,' 'always connected' generation into the library, physically and virtually at Tabor College of Higher Education.

Introduction

OCLC is one of the world's leading research centres analysing the challenges facing libraries in a rapidly changing information technology environment. Like most librarians, I've been following OCLC's research and advice by reading their reports and attending online webinars for a number of years. These resources are free, and I find them useful and full of practical information. In October last year, I received an invitation to submit a Lightning Talk Video for their upcoming annual Asia-Pacific conference. The invitation had a very attractive message attached promising that the makers of the 5 best videos would receive a free conference registration in Hong Kong.



The theme of the conference was Tracking digital footprints and using it to recognise and predict user behaviour. To tie up with the theme, the video had to show work that the library is doing with younger users, to keep them engaged in the library.

There were certain requirements for the video, ie it had to be reasonably 'unprofessional', ie not made by a marketing department; filmed with a mobile device, like a laptop, smartphone or tablet; and no longer than 5 minutes.

The Video

And at Tabor we decided to give it a go. Making the video turned out to be a great experience in which all our library staff and many students got involved with. We received a lot of advice and creative ideas from our students. I must admit our original script was pretty straightforward – we listed all the changes and were going to talk about each one of them. But when we started filming, one of our young advisors came up with a much more creative idea of storytelling. You can see it in the “mission impossible” episode.

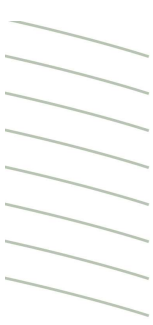
In short, the video shows some of the innovations of the past 3 years that were implemented in order to satisfy our younger students’ needs and improve their library experience. We have around 450 FTE students at the college, with the average age being 37. Students aged between 17 and 25 comprise 32% of all student population. This is the group that we call “younger students”.

The video was filmed entirely with an iPhone6. The music track was purchased from www.pond5.com. The voice-over is done by Stephen Spence, Vice President of the college. Here is the video we made:

<https://vimeo.com/185876575/919c6cf689>

Young Tabor Students

Tabor library is a small academic library, with four library staff working at Adelaide campus and one at Forrestfield campus, WA. Naturally, we all do a lot of counter work with students, so we have continuous interaction and feedback. It’s very important for us to find out what our students really need and want rather than relying on assumptions. In addition to this student feedback and observations we also undertake other methods of data collection, ie web- and paper-based user surveys; interviews with students; usability testing and data analytics. These methods are part of our evidence-based approach in decision making. We then translate our findings into practical solutions with the help of the NMC Horizon, IFLA and OCLC reports and best practice.



Based on our findings, Tabor younger generation students are:

- always connected to their mobile devices and social media
- social and prefer to work together in groups rather than alone
- impatient and expect instant access, immediate answers, not willing to wait for anything
- confident with technology and support innovations. Up-to-date technology is an expected service
- independent - prefer self-service, like doing things by themselves and not having to ask for help
- like a comfortable environment, including nearness of cafe and visually appealing, comfortable and flexible furniture
- despite the fact that they are born digitally, many have low level information literacy skills and struggle in an academic environment
- don't like purchasing textbooks – they expect them to be provided
- don't like returning books on time
- many study online/externally

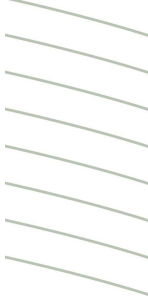
Innovative Methods of Engagement

The improvements we have implemented are grouped around four main themes: Library Systems (Technology), Collections, Facilities and Services.

Systems/Technology

For the Library to remain a relevant and desirable place for younger students to visit, we knew that we had to improve our technology. We had extremely weak WiFi on campus with just a few hotspots available. We replaced it with a Sisco controller and increased the number of access points from 5 to 15. WiFi is now college-wide and students have the ability to print wireless from their own devices from anywhere on campus.

We installed a Charging station for all mobile devices and increased the number of computers in the library despite some resistance from IT department. They argued that students bring their own laptops and do not need PCs in the library. Many students do indeed bring their own devices and we installed laptop bars for their convenience. Yet all the computers in the library get used and are greatly in demand. We equipped every workstation with powerpoints and extension boards with USB-ports, and all student PCs now have headphones permanently attached to them, to allow them watch their online lectures without inconveniencing other users.



In 2014, we replaced our ‘old’ library management system (vLibrary from Functional Solutions) with Alma (ExLibris) and its discovery service Primo. This attractive looking catalogue with a Google-like simplicity is embedded in Moodle and provides students with access to library resources including e-books and journals 24/7. At the same time Alma has a strong suite of analytics so we can easily monitor the usage of resources. Our statistics showed a 45% increase in full-text retrievals of electronic resources compared to what it was before Primo.

Collections

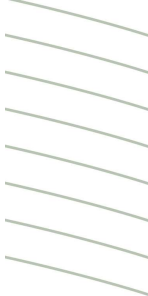
We introduced a digital preferred collection strategy at Tabor two years ago (where e-books would be purchased in preference to print), and in this short period of time the number of e-books has increased from just a few to over 200,000. Not everyone likes e-books but when it comes to convenience, saving money and for those studying externally not having to wait for a book to arrive by post and therefore being able to complete their assignment on time the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

Library-licensed e-textbooks, especially in the areas of Teacher Education and Humanities and Social Sciences are hard to find because publishers know they are required texts and prefer each student to buy an individual copy. Many students decide not to buy their textbooks because of their high cost, and as a consequence they are more likely to fail their course. Inspired by Western Sydney University’s initiative to provide their undergraduate students with free digital textbooks, last year we signed a Higher Education E-textbooks agreement with Pearson, our main supplier of the Australian resources for the School of Education. It allows up to three concurrent users to access a textbook at a time via MyiLibrary platform. To date, we have purchased licences to 15 e-textbooks. Traditionally and as part of library policy we keep a hard copy of each required textbook in the overnight loan collection. Naturally we see a lot of circulation and drama when a textbook is not returned on time. When we looked at the statistics for the e-textbook usage for the first semester we were pleasantly surprised. Each title has been “borrowed” on average 196 times in 10 weeks. That is a lot of borrowing that library staff didn’t have to do, access convenience and money saved for students. This year we are expanding our interest in e-textbooks to the range offered by ProQuest.

In order to enhance the awareness of e-book availability, we attach labels to the print books that also have an e-copy. The labels say “I’m available as an e-book” and have a QR code linked directly to an e-book.

Facilities

When it comes to furniture, we prefer educational furniture suppliers to library suppliers. This is because educational furniture offer a fabulous range of bright colours and flexibility – tables come in different shapes compatible with each other, with folding flip tops, and have castor wheels. It’s really easy for students to either bring them together for a group discussion or take apart for individual study. Bean bags are popular because students can take them to a quiet place with their laptop and work or sleep!



Unfortunately the growth of collaborative practice has added challenge of keeping the library quiet. Every allocated “quiet” space for individual work, even carrels very quickly become group study spaces with students pulling in chairs and tables. We are working on a solution by creating zones in the library where partitions prevent furniture from being moved too easily.

Originally the library looked very dark because the rows of tall bookshelves were blocking all the natural light. Shelves should work with natural light, not against, so what we did is we took off dust covers (or canopy shelves) and removed two shelves from each bay that was aligned with a window. This created paths of unobstructed light. And light there was! It is amazing how much space changes with the right light.

We then noticed students using those “shelf-windows” for placing books when browsing shelves and writing notes and references. So we installed natural wood colour tops and turned them into standing workstations that are both practical and look great.

Services

Because our younger students are independent, confident with technology and like to do things by themselves, the Library installed Self-checkout unit empowered with RFID technology.

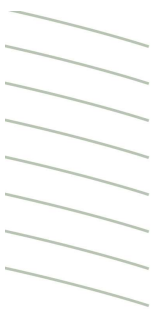
It was a two-stage project – first came the Kiosk and it was working OK but not great because people had to scan in one item at a time to borrow. With the RFID technology I love looking at students’ faces when they place a pile of books on the pad and it goes tick-tick-tick-tick-tick on the screen. They’re like O-o-o-! We were expecting a learning curve with this new technology but it was next to zero because the new generation Kiosks are easy to use.

Our digital delivery service has always been popular but thanks to the new library system, the process of requesting scans of articles and book chapters has been simplified to just two mouse clicks.

For students studying online or those who choose not to come to the Orientation we created Library Orientation LibGuides and self-help videos. So if it’s 2 o’clock in the morning and they don’t know how to download an e-book they can watch a short video and learn. If you check Moodle analytics you can clearly see the convenience of this service, because 20% of students use the self-help videos between midnight and 3am.

To address students’ expectation of ‘instant’, we send SMS notifications about holds available. SMS text messages service is a nice alternative to emails and much more useful for younger students.

We introduced a live chat support a couple of years ago. Again, the response to this real-time service seems to suggest that younger users prefer chat to a phone call.



Our students now don't have to remember when borrowed items are due to be returned or renewed because we implemented automatic renewals on loans. This has lowered stress and anxiety levels in both students and library staff.

We now deliver information literacy workshops on-demand only and around major assignment time, tied up to the assignment topic.

Conclusion

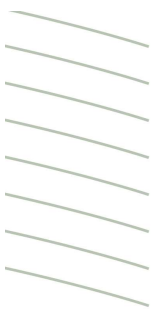
This video project was not only extremely fun to do, but it was also a great opportunity for us to summarise and reflect on all the changes we have implemented over the last few years. This gave us all a sense of achievement and reason to celebrate a job well done.

And there is more to this story because our video made to the top five and I was lucky enough to go to Hong Kong and enjoy the conference.

Young people in the library: innovative methods of engagement

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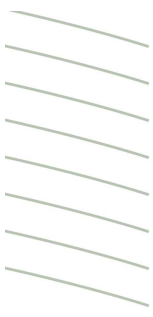




Libraries at the Crossroads

Tracking Digital Footprints





Tabor Library



Young Tabor Students are ...

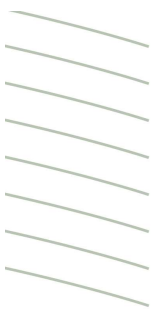


- ✓ always connected
- ✓ social
- ✓ impatient
- ✓ confident with technology
- ✓ independent
- ✓ love comfort
- ✓ lacking information literacy
- ✓ don't like buying textbooks
- ✓ don't like returning loans
- ✓ study online

Systems

- ✓ Wi-Fi
- ✓ Charging station
- ✓ PCs +++
- ✓ Laptop bars
- ✓ Powerpoints
- ✓ ALMA/Primo





Collections

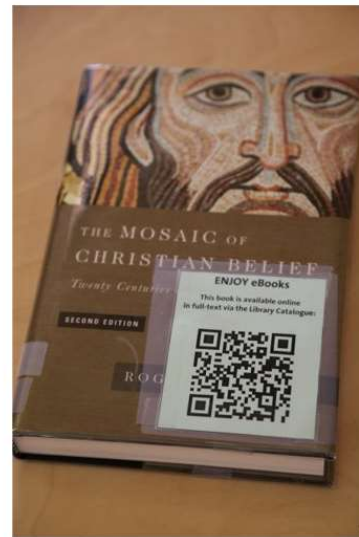
✓ Digital strategy

✓ eTextbooks



Collections

✓ QR codes



Facilities

✓ Furniture





Facilities

✓ Furniture



Facilities

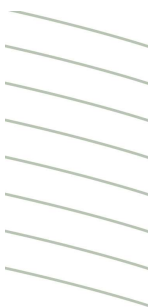
✓ Shelves



Services

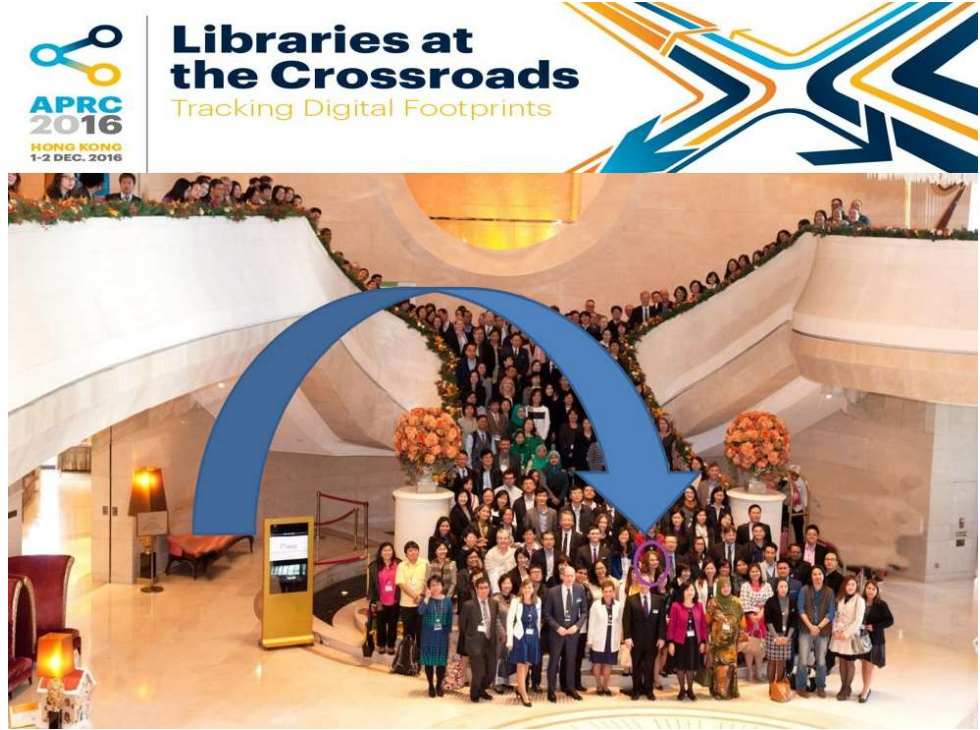
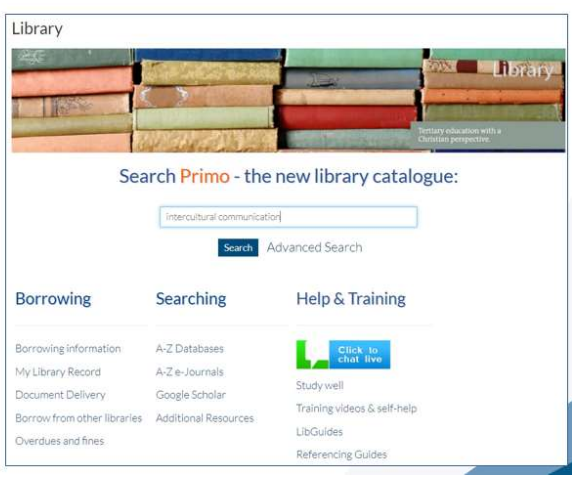
- ✓ Self checkout unit + RFID
- ✓ Document delivery
- ✓ LibGuides
- ✓ Self-help videos





Services

- ✓SMS
- ✓Live Chat
- ✓Auto renewals
- ✓Information literacy



Thank you!

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