

## ***Innovation, experimentation and persistence. The success factors of an Australian tripartite library.***

The Rockingham Regional Campus Community Library opened the doors to its three stakeholder groups on February 8 1998. It is a joint use library that looks after the needs of the City of Rockingham, Challenger Tafe (a technical college) and Murdoch University. The library is built on a regional education precinct 40 kms south of the Perth CBD in Western Australia. The City of Rockingham has a population of over 90,000 people and is served by 3 public libraries. Our library was originally a joint use library with TAFE and the City but an agreement between the three partners was drawn up after the University commenced offering courses at Rockingham in 1996. In April 2007 our library management system showed that we have a patron base of 2873 university students, 4878 TAFE students and over 17000 active city patrons.

Our Mission is to provide quality services that meet the information, recreation and learning needs of the local community, the TAFE campus and the University campus by ensuring equitable access to information resources.

### **History**

Before the tripartite agreement was formalized the library staff members were employed on 2 separate industrial awards each working different numbers of hours per week, getting different pay rates and working different public holidays. The impact of those variant awards led to low morale and a very dysfunctional staffing structure. They used 2 library systems 1 an automated dynix system and the City component was still a manual system, the Browne system.

Those early days proved problematic as each stakeholder group wanted to use their own system. The university at that time was using Innopac. It was and still is a very powerful system. We had discussions with all the stakeholders and decided it was in the best interests of all parties to use the Innopac Library Management System. The City also decided to join us and so all 3 branches of the City of Rockingham are on the same system.

The campus is in a semi industrial area with very little residential housing surrounding it. However, it is accessible to good parking and is strategically located at the front entrance of the campus so that members of the public don't need to walk through the campus to access the library.

### **INNOVATION**

In the Western Australian context, University libraries have traditionally been at the forefront of using new and innovative technologies, so we have been fortunate over the past 10 years to always be able to offer our users self check, powerful library systems and fast internet access.

We currently have over 50 public access PCs which, compared to other Western Australian public libraries is significant.

Public Internet Access Financial Year 2005-2006	
Rockingham	51
Joondalup	16
Fremantle	5
Perth City	3

(Statistical Bulletin State Library of Western Australia accessed May 2007)

Interestingly it has set the benchmark for local expectations and other public libraries in the City have developed along with us. Right from the start my aim was to produce a seamless organisation, one of the ways this was done was by integrating the collections. For instance all the non-fiction collection is in one run with City, TAFE and University items sitting next to each other on the shelves. The library patrons usually are not aware whose book they are borrowing.

### **Industrial matters**

I have always been passionate about Joint use libraries and during my career had worked in public and special libraries in Sydney. I have worked for Murdoch University since 1978 in a variety of roles but had no TAFE library experience. I took a secondment to Challenger TAFE in 1996 so that I would be in a position to apply for the Joint Use Manager role when it became available. That secondment made me realize the importance of having only one industrial award for the staff.

Before we moved to the new library building staffing needed to be finalized. The positions were offered to all current staff at Murdoch University, Challenger TAFE and the City of Rockingham and all signed a contract ensuring seamless service to all stakeholder groups. We needed to ensure that we achieved the best outcome for all our staff. We looked at the awards for each group and decided that the university had the best to offer. Especially with 17% superannuation. Only 1 substantive staff member decided not to transfer to the joint library.

### **Courses**

Synergies have occurred across the Higher education and TAFE sectors with combos in education, engineering, business and nursing being offered that cross the boundaries of both sectors. From a library perspective this has led to savings by both education facilities as items are not duplicated.

Murdoch University offers degrees in Business, IT, Primary education and Community Development at its Rockingham Campus. Until 2006 we also offered engineering but currently only the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year students are based at Rockingham. The courses offered by Challenger TAFE at the Rockingham Campus have resulted in a wonderful synergy with those that are offered by the university. For example: Challenger TAFE offers Child Care and Primary Teacher Assistant courses, and Murdoch University offers a Primary Teacher Education Degree. Students are also supported in gaining a "combo" degree in Education by both Challenger TAFE and Murdoch University where students are able to complete TAFE and university subjects or units. Challenger TAFE also offers a range of engineering and business certificates which means that both the technical and the university courses work well together.

The City's needs are both informational and recreational; this blends with our other stakeholder's requirements. Until 2007 we had housed our childcare (TAFE) and Curriculum resources (University) in separate physical spaces even though both could borrow from each collection previously. It has taken us 10 years to realize the benefits of our joint venture and combine all the texts, monographs etc in one room regardless of who purchased them and to place all the realia, kits etc in the other room.

### **Benchmarked best practice**

As one of only a few 3 partner joint use libraries in Australia a number of other organizations use Rockingham as a benchmark. We spend considerable time assisting others to see some of the pitfalls and positives of joint use so that they too can sell the concept to others in their communities. We were recognized as best practice internationally by an Australian Government report into the effectiveness of community partnership.

In this report commissioned by the then Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs titled "Multi Partner Campuses – The future of Australian higher education" one of the recommendations talked about modeling new campuses upon "the experience of exemplary partnerships such as Rockingham Western Australia, Coffs Harbour and Nirimba in NSW and especially Almere in the Netherlands. (Shoemaker p 159)

The library has always been the jewel in the crown of the regional campus and over the years has gone from strength to strength. This growth reinforced the observation "that this is a stand out facility in national terms." (Shoemaker p17)

The City of Geraldton in Western Australia has been looking at developing a joint use facility and in developing a business case, the project manager was thrilled to realize that with the shared costs the library could open far more hours than was currently available in the City. We are open many more hours than most public libraries in the state. During academic teaching periods (semester) we open for 61 hours and have managed to offer 7 day a week service to the City of Rockingham by collaborating with the other 2 public libraries in the City.

### **Promotion**

We have started a series of author evenings with wine and cheese to try and entice non library users into the library. These have been hugely successful and have introduced the library to many who didn't even know that we existed. Publicizing the Library has been a major ongoing commitment, I still find it incredible that some members of the public still don't know we exist and that is despite lots of local promotion. Or they know we are here but don't realize we are a public library.

The joint use has indeed broken down the barriers for many local people to university education. The City is primarily a demographic that has not valued tertiary education and by locating the public library on the campus it has made people realize that it's not as threatening as first thought.

Another library in the City is a public and high school library and people don't seem to enjoy the impact of whole classes of teenagers as much as the smaller cohorts of students who use the University and Tafe library.

## **EXPERIMENTATION**

### **Management**

A Policy Advisory Committee was introduced from the very first to support the campus librarian in the management of the library. This committee has representation from all stakeholder groups and in the early days users from each group. Alan Bundy comments that

"Joint Use libraries require a considerable investment – rarely accounted for – of library staff, advisory committee and partner time and endeavour "(Bundy p. 7) We attempt to meet every quarter but in reality this has diminished over the years. We have met twice over the last 12 months and this is primarily because the library hasn't had any major issues. As many of you know, the difficulties of getting a number of senior people together at the same time is always complex. My staff makes sure they are always in contact with the stakeholder groups whether they are City Officers or TAFE lecturers and this amounts to a considerable staff time commitment.

Over the years our offerings from both the University and TAFE have changed and in the Library we have needed to be able to support changing collections. The university had initially offered Tourism at Rockingham but that has now moved to another campus which has meant that part of the collection has been moved to other locations and we have needed systems and the logistics to do that. Nursing has spent the last semester at Rockingham so again those collections have moved.

Western Australia has quite an interesting public library service where the collections in all public libraries are primarily owned by the state and part of the collection is circulated on a monthly basis. New items are selected weekly and then also available to be permanently circulated. The bonus of a joint library system is it allows us to select items that can supplement and enhance existing collections across partners needs.

Rockingham has a population of 90,000 and currently over 17,000 active public members use the Rockingham library. This does not include the members who have joined the other 2 branches of the City and use our library. The first day of operation I recall driving up to the new purpose built building and wondering if anyone would come. There was of course a honeymoon period where over a thousand people a day were coming through the

doors, more recently this figure has remained around 800 each day. I have periodically cleaned our patron database and deleted public patrons who haven't used their cards in 3 or 4 years. This of course is deceptive as many people now don't borrow books but use the library to access other information and recreational sources.

## Usage

Our usage statistics need to show a large number of factors other than loans. These statistics cover the calendar year 2006 and show our patron numbers as of the December 2006.

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Murdoch</b>	<b>Challenger</b>	<b>Rock City</b>	<b>Total</b>
Total Patrons	2346	4468	20992	27806
All loans year to date	24999	6277	167061	198337
Occupancy counts	120	63	144	327
Patrons visiting the Library. Total Jan- Dec 2006	N/A	N/A	N/A	161728
Information literacy sessions number by type of patron Jan – Dec 2006	54 (723 students)	54 (672 students)	8 (60 patrons)	116 (1455)
Collection development e.g. titles received Jan - Dec	900	252	614	1766
Collection Size	34750	12889	44196	91835
Booked use of computers by patron type Jan - Dec	5383	3098	18471	26952
Booked use of rooms for teaching/ groups Jan - Dec	109	59	102	270

Loans statistics and patron numbers are not a good indicator of value in joint use libraries. Our public patrons are by far the heaviest users in terms of numbers and loans but our TAFE and University patrons take up far more staff time in Information Literacy and the complexity of their reference needs.

## Staffing

We have had a stable staffing component of 9 since the very beginning. My position as Director, a deputy Campus Librarian, a reference librarian, 1 supervisor position and a number of full time and part time library officers who all work exceptionally hard. They are committed to joint use and love the variety of work that joint libraries offer. The down side is that we need to be incredibly multi skilled. Being a remote campus the library provides everything from student cards to IT assistance for wireless and help with printing, copying and scanning. There is no such luxury as subject specialization and we help nurses, engineers and historians as well as electricians and bricklayers.

We then of course have to be entertaining enough to offer school holiday activities and regular story telling sessions.

Our colleagues at the University think its hysterical when we ask them to catalogue fluffy toys and kiddies books. All of our cataloguing and processing is done by university staff at the main campus of the university and we pay them as part of our operating costs.

We have a fantastic group of casual staff made up of TAFE and University students and I have attempted to have staff that is representative of the client base. This includes people with disabilities and people from different cultures.

## Access

In the early days of operation we thought that no processing would be done at Rockingham and the work area was designed accordingly. The library has huge inter library loan traffic to other libraries in the public system and we also operate a large inter campus courier system. We also do short record cataloguing and need to process our state wide exchange loads. With any new library building design there are problems. Ours have been minimal and that has been largely due to consultation with library staff at all levels by the designer and architect.

Trying to delineate between our three stakeholder groups has been an interesting problem .Being a regional campus most of our University and TAFE students are local residents and we had issues with University students borrowing their full load and then using their public card. From an equity point of view this can be problematic because students who live in other suburbs can borrow from their own City collections. Because we have one collection we made the decision to merge the records so that patrons only have 1 membership record. Our university students can borrow 12 items and TAFE and City can borrow 10. If they were doing a TAFE subject and a University subject and you lived in Rockingham you could borrow 32 items if we didn't merge the records together.

As you can imagine database access is a huge issue. The university subscribes to a large number of databases, TAFE as a technical education provider subscribes to a smaller number and the City has access to a number of consortia based databases offered through the state wide system.

We provide walk in access to patrons and then offer stakeholder access via the webpage to the individual groups. The webpage was constructed in early 2000 and will be updated in the near future.

**ABOUT US**

**CONTACT US**

**SUGGESTIONS**

**ASK A LIBRARIAN**

**DATABASES**

**CATALOGUE**

**YOUNG PEOPLE**

**NEWS & EVENTS**



**ROCKINGHAM REGIONAL CAMPUS COMMUNITY LIBRARY**

In truth City members are usually well serviced by the databases subscribed to by the State service but from a reference perspective we are very fortunate to have access to such a large range of information databases

## PERSISTENCE

### Funding formula

In February 2008 we will celebrate our 10th year of operation. We have survived and succeeded through the fantastic goodwill of the 3 stakeholder groups. The library is the result of an exceptional relationship between 3 CEOs who trusted each other and probably came up with the idea for a joint use library over a bottle of red wine. We have an operational agreement that clarifies what will happen if we “divorce” but the operational funding was always on a 3<sup>rd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> basis on the premise that a funding formula would be agreed to in the future and that no group could do it on their own more efficiently.

Of course over time CEOs change and the funding formula has proven to be a difficult challenge. On the basis of loans the City would pay 84% of the operating costs but as I've stated previously the University and TAFE occupy a vastly larger amount of staff time for information literacy and reference.

Very little work appears to have been done on the cost of providing library services to public members compared to educational users. A report was commissioned by CAUL (Council of Australian University Librarians) in 2005 to look at the comparative cost of library services to TAFE students in a dual sector university. From that research the cost of providing library support to a TAFE student compared to a higher education student was recommended to be 33.2%.

To date we still haven't come up with an acceptable level of funding for each group. Currently the university has been paying the majority at about 42% with the City paying 33% and TAFE 25%.

Traditionally TAFE are not big library users but this is changing with the expectations of TAFE courses rising. The TAFE contribution needs to be increased but this cannot be based on percentage of usage but rather by comparing costs to service other TAFE libraries. This is one area where persistence will be paramount.

### Naming issues

One of our early problems and one that still persists today is our name. “Rockingham Regional Campus Community Library” was created to include all the stakeholders and to signal ownership by the community.

Today everyone is a little less concerned about it and we shorten it to Rockingham Regional Library or Rockingham Community Library.

We encourage everyone to recognize it as the Rockingham Regional Library however Murdoch University Library tends to be used by many because it is on the university side of the educational precinct. We try to discourage this because it is important to include the partners.

### Parking

Another issue that needs all our patience and persistence is the issue of parking. University students pay for parking, TAFE students do not and the City would never agree to charge for public parking.

We have tried various solutions but university students pretend they are just members of the public and park in the public zone – of course P plates and Billabong surf stickers tend to tell us that they may not be retirees.

Though they may be TAFE students who drive to the library because its 500 metres from the Tafe campus. The

intention was always that the TAFE would expand towards the University and the library would be at the centre of the educational precinct, this has not happened as yet.

After years of energetic discussion the university decided to give free parking at Rockingham. There are still problems because the public parking is closer to the Library than the student parking and so students are still tempted to park there.

This combined with campus facilities staff that occasionally go on a rampage and fine everyone without a sticker in the wrong zone can lead to very unhappy public patrons. So I have on occasion paid fines because of rigid bureaucratic policies that can't cope with joint use facilities. Perhaps one answer is to remove all the parking restrictions, if we can persuade the stakeholder groups to agree to this?

### **New costs**

As a joint use library with very little restriction on internet access from the perspective that university students need unrestricted access for study purposes, it has given rise to increased download and internet costs. Many of our public patrons spend huge amounts of time on *Myspace* and *Youtube*. We try to keep PC bookings to an hour but it seems inappropriate to remove someone from a PC when they are not been used by someone else. I'm also conscious that if we don't continue to attract young people into libraries we could be looking at our own demise in the future. Our costs like other libraries are shifting from collections to electronic access.

We were allowing unlimited downloads but the costs were becoming prohibitive. University students have quota access on campus and TAFE have an E-link so we decided to block downloads from the internet.

This has caused problems for public members who can't download attachments from emails so we have staff download them at the reference desk which impacts on staff workloads.

We have internet games afternoons during school holidays but we have blocked two specific game sites because of disruption in the library.

### **Celebrations and events**

I spend a lot of time making sure all the stakeholders know it's their library. I attend all the senior staff meetings for the City, TAFE and the University and I encourage all the partners to use the library for celebrations and events. Our Foyer/exhibition area which everyone thought would be a waste of space is used for Art Exhibitions, especially the TAFE Kadajini Mia indigenous art exhibition, public displays and social events.

Children's Book Week activities are held there and we encourage the partners to use the library meeting rooms for professional development and in house meetings.

### **Conclusion**

We need to persist in encouraging true believers...people who are passionate about joint libraries and the benefits they bring to the community as a whole.

Rockingham Regional Library nearly 10 years on is a thriving joint use library. An innovative approach and experimentation has given us the ability to offer a quality seamless library service to our diverse client group and to lift the benchmark and expectations of a community that deserves quality library services.

Rockingham is changing from a low socio economic area with high youth unemployment to a thriving sophisticated City. In those early days I expected the new library to be graffitied and vandalized but over the 10 years there has been a real sense of ownership by the community and we have experienced very little graffiti or vandalism.

Managing the joint use library has been the highlight of my career. My staff has achieved what many thought we'd struggle to accomplish and that is a state of the art library service that is enjoyed and respected by all the partners.

The issues that have required our persistent attention will still exist but I am confident that those challenging factors can be beaten as we continue to develop and respond to our patrons information needs.

Our city patrons, Uni students and TAFE students will continue to appreciate and value our contribution to their educational and recreational experiences.

### **References**

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