The ‘new normal’: leveraging technology to improve service provision and the student experience

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A new beginning
The challenge

• Achieve a ratio of 1 seat for every 10 students
• Provide a variety of informal and flexible learning spaces for students
• Improve students’ experience of using the Library
• Store the entire print collection onsite
The solution
Leveraging technology:
an Automated Storage and Retrieval System

• Economically viable
• High density, vertical storage on a footprint of 1000 sq.m.
• Capacity to store up to 1.8 million items
• All resources can be stored onsite
Instead of shelves of books...
…a variety of flexible learning spaces
Outcomes

• The Automated Retrieval Collection (ARC) achieved our goal of an onsite storage solution for our collection
• 130 items are retrieved from the ARC on average each day
• Very little negative feedback received from clients
The trade-off

The introduction of this new technology:

• Increased the amount of mediation required in delivering services – at odds with our service philosophy to increase self-sufficiency and self-service

• Reduced choices for clients
Consultation with clients highlighted potential issues:

- Lack of browsing capability

‘The Library is a fine building – but where are the books? I encourage my students to browse – and that’s how I’ve gotten half the books I’ve needed in my life. You should be able to pick up a book and see what’s in it’.
Resistance to change:

‘Why have the collection of Australian history [books] been taken off the shelves? Yes they can be found online and retrieved but if they are not on the shelves they will fall into disuse. The [books] should be on the shelves if Australian history is to flourish in this university’.
Client consultation and response

• A library-centric approach to service provision forced clients to work the way we do rather than offering options

http://www.flickr.com/photos/travelinlibrarian/127580761/in/set-72057594081537084
Leveraging technology to provide choice

From the real bookshelf …
… to the Virtual Bookshelf…
....displaying electronic resources
Simplifying access to the real bookshelves
Re-focusing on our clients

“I can **find my way** around the library”

“I can **get help** with my assignment”

“I can **access** postgraduate room”

“I can **get access** to items that the Library does not have”

“I can **get training** for my research project”

“I can **request** an item be purchased by the Library”

“I can **book time** with a librarian for individual consultation”

“I can **order an item** from the ARC and pick it up”

“I can **access the internet** using computers provided by the Library”

“I can **print** my assignment”

“I can **study** with my group”

“I can **borrow** a laptop”
Simplifying services and providing choice

- Providing virtual and face-to-face services
- Offering similar services at all service points
- Providing a seamless service through referral and taking services to our clients
Providing service support

- Six Service Coordinator positions established to lead teams on shifts
- Service Coordinators monitor incidents to identify recurring issues, investigate underlying problems and identify creative ways of resolving these
VoiceLink: a hands-free, voice activated wireless communication system enables us to provide seamless client service.
Benefits of VoiceLink

- Instant communication with another staff member via a VoiceLink badge or a phone enables rapid response
- Flexible service provision - staff can deliver services where they are required
- Encourages and supports staff communication
Roving services

Taking services to the clients, supported by the VoiceLink system
What is the ‘new normal’?

- A client-centred approach to providing services
- Engaging with clients to determine changing needs
- Proactively identifying ways to improve service delivery
- Leveraging technology to deliver improved services
But it takes more than technology

Improving the student experience requires:

• Cultural change
• Taking risks
• Listening to, and communicating with, clients
• Collaboration to provide ‘joined up’ services
The ‘new normal’ - the way we work now

• Technology is causing a fundamental shift in the behaviour and expectations of new generation users

• Continually reviewing our strategies and services enables us to respond to changing user needs

• The ‘new normal’ is a state of mind