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## **The First Year HDR Experience Report 2006 – Results and Responses**

### **HDR Candidature Management Project: Improving the first year research experience (2006)**

The study aims to explore the experience of first year higher degree research (HDR) students at Macquarie University. It is hoped that the initiatives can serve as a reference for quality management in this area and provide more effective candidature management.

This report captures the part of the study that is related to the services provided by Macquarie University Library. The study that the Library is responding to was carried out in Semester 1 2006.

The overall response to the Library services from HDR students commencing in Semester 1 2006 was positive. Certain Library services such as the Outreach Librarian services (now re-branded as the Liaison Librarians), Inter-library loan services and courses provided by the Library were praised by the respondents. However there are several areas that were raised as a concern by this group of students.

#### **Library skills classes / courses**

*Part-time HDR students commented on some difficulties in accessing training courses such as Endnote and thesis writing, due to the times they are run*

In 2006, the Library provided 24 evening and Saturday training sessions, including Endnote sessions. Among these 13 Saturday or evening training sessions were specifically arranged for HDR students. On top of these evening and weekend classes, we also provide online training courses on our website:

<http://www.library.mq.edu.au/training/online.html>

for distance students and students who can't come to the campus to attend the courses in person.

However, as numbers showed in 2006, certain evening or Saturday classes only had 4 to 5 people turning up. The Library has tried different ways to improve attendance through registration reminders and asking our clients to reconfirm before the classes. However, the results with these measures were not satisfactory either. With a low number of attendances, it is difficult for the Library to justify an increase of evening and Saturday sessions. Nonetheless, with sufficient enrolments, we will try our best to tailor to the needs of our HDR students, and we encourage departments to contact the Liaison Librarians to discuss additional out-of-hours classes with them.

## **Recall Policy**

*The book 'recall' policy is slowing down HDR students' research*

The Library recall policy is implemented to encourage fair use of limited resources. The recall policy was introduced to improve access for all clients to scarce or competitive materials inside the Library, as the Library does not always hold multiple copies of all resources. In addition, certain resources are now available in electronic format and clients may be able to access an electronic copy of the resource if they are available. If certain resources become highly sought after or certain research subjects fall short in collection coverage, clients are encouraged to contact our Liaison Librarians and discuss with them. Further, the Library will continue to review its loan policies to meet the changing needs of our clients.

## **Resources for Research**

*Some HDR participants felt that the Library was not adequately stocked for their specialisation and were again, as in 2005, relying on other university libraries e.g. Fisher Library*

The Library has a Collection Development and Evaluation Committee whose brief is to improve the depth and coverage of our collection. Work undertaken by this Committee includes making recommendations about future collection development strategies and reviewing Collection Development policies and related guidelines. The Committee meets regularly to update the collection development policies of the Library to meet the academic / research needs of the University.

Clients' input is also highly valued so that the Library can fully support the academic / research needs of the University. HDR participants are encouraged to contact our Liaison Librarians to recommend the purchase of materials for your academic / research needs.

## **Photocopiers are too complex to use**

*Library photocopiers were seen by some students as too complex and hence, resulted in paper waste, with not enough training or assistance on hand*

The Library aims to provide a standard interface that is as easy to use as possible and this was a criterion for selecting the new copiers in 2005. Simple picture instructions are available on all copiers as a quick guide for users. Also, ready assistance is available at the Photocopy Services Centre on Level 3 when required. This area is always staffed to provide training and assistance for users.

## **Study Space in the Library**

*Most 2006 HDR participants commented that they did not use the physical library...for the following reasons:*

- *Inadequate provision of suitable space for HDR student research and study needs*
- *Lack of storage space for research and personal items*

The Library is acutely aware of the issues related to space and storage and is working within the current space to improve these wherever possible. The Library will be able to provide additional study space for students when the computer lab on Level 1 is relocated to C5C. Planning and negotiations to relocate the lab are currently underway.

In the meantime, the Library has made efforts in the existing limited space to expand the number of study seats. In January 2007, more seats were released from the Reserve area and placed in the common public area. Also seats and study carrels were consolidated during the summer to provide more study space for students. The Library will endeavour to provide more study space for our students within the limits of the current building by consolidating space usage through various measures such as releasing certain unused staff space for students wherever possible. Study space will also be one of the prime considerations for the new Library building.

In terms of storage for students, lockers are available inside the Postgraduate Reading Room on Level 2. However, they are timed lockers that open automatically at 12am each day to ensure that lockers are not reserved by students for continuous personal use. The Library does not currently provide long-term storage facilities for researchers or students, however it is hoped that this can be addressed in the new building.

## **Computer and IT facilities**

*The HDR room provided in the Library is seen as inadequate, e.g. there are no windows, no computers, nowhere to plug in to the IT network and students cannot always get a space.*

*There are insufficient power points throughout the library for utilising laptops, as well as a lack of comprehensive wireless Internet coverage and IT network outlets.*

The Library is aware of the increasing demand and pressure for quiet research space for HDR students and that the current space does not meet demands. The Library is looking to improve the situation within the limits of the current building to provide a larger area for quiet research.

The Library will roll out new PCs in the public areas in the coming months. These new machines will improve our clients' experience with our computing facilities. There is currently no machine provided in the Postgraduate

Reading Room. In the past, the Library provided a catalogue PC in the room for catalogue searching. However, the machine was frequently disconnected by users for plugging their own devices into the power point. As a result, the Library removed the machine to release a spare power point for users. If there is a demonstrated need for a general-purpose machine in the Room, the Library can consider re-installing one for our users.

The Library provides a laptop area with power points for users on Level 2 & 3. However, the number of laptop users in the Library has grown beyond its capacity to provide power outlets. The Library will be able to provide more space for laptop users and more power points once the computer lab on Level 1 is moved out of the Library. Planning and negotiations to relocate the lab are underway at the moment.

Further, the Library is currently working with ITS to improve the wireless reception inside the Library building. Existing wireless points have been identified for replacement; new stations will be added around the building and some current stations relocated so that reception and connectivity is improved. Wireless access is currently available in the Postgraduate Reading Room.

Due to security reasons, the Library can only provide wireless network access to laptop users. Plug-in connection to the network breaches network security.

### **Login names and passwords**

*Many students continue to comment on the high number of passwords required for access to all their online services and materials, although some noted that the password requirements were being simplified.*

The Library tries to offer online services using consistent login names and passwords. However, there are occasions that this cannot be done due to reasons beyond our control such as software or IT infrastructure restrictions. We regularly review the situation in this area, and aim to achieve a more streamlined process for our online services in the future.