TOWARDS A LEARNING COMMONS:
Modelling a Transformation of
Library Services and Information
Resource Provision in the
Vocational Education Sector

2007

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(CIP, ISBN, etc.)
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## Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALA</td>
<td>American Library Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANTA</td>
<td>Australian National Training Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAUL</td>
<td>Council of Australian University Librarians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCNR</td>
<td>Centre for Community Networking Research (Faculty of Information Technology, Monash University)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COAG</td>
<td>Council of Australian Governments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEST</td>
<td>Department of Education, Science and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERA</td>
<td>Electronic Resources Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RICH</td>
<td>Resource and Information Centre Headquarters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPL</td>
<td>Recognition of Prior Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAFE</td>
<td>Technical and Further Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VATL</td>
<td>Victorian Association of Technical and Further Education Libraries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational Educational and Training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Executive Summary

This research project was initiated to address the paucity of proper understanding of the conceptual grounding and shared role of libraries in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector. The Victorian Association of TAFE (Technical and Further Education) Libraries and the Centre for Community Networking Research, Monash University (www.ccnr.net), are partners in the project, with further support from the TAFE Development Centre.

The emergence in the wider information and knowledge management community of Information or Learning Commons models provides precedents. Our project explores the viability and scope of a Learning Commons model for Victorian TAFE libraries. In preparing this summary of research, a brief snapshot of the position of Vocational Education and Training is reviewed from both the Federal and State perspectives. Statistical data is used to evaluate the current situation in relation to TAFE libraries in Victoria, and to compare with the government attitudes and commitments to the sector overall. Questionnaires, a wiki, and a search conference all elicited the necessary research data, which go to make up this report.

The search conference which constituted a major focus for this research project provided a forum for examination of the effectiveness of a collaborative approach to shared problems. The main issues included: staff development, collaboration for mutual support, the physical environment, availability of and access to learning resources, and keeping up with change. All participants were encouraged to table their experiences and to voice their views of the future. The conference raised awareness and encouraged constructive solutions, whilst acknowledging that many libraries face challenges due to differences in size, location and funding levels.

The search conference, and indeed this research summary are only envisaged as the beginnings of the project, which is intended to be an ongoing process, with further input and development from all involved.
Section One - Project Description and Background

A report was published by McIntyre and Hardy (1988) which outlined the “Guidelines for the operation of TAFE Library Resource Centres in Victoria” for the period 1988 to 1992. Since then, no significant investigative work had been undertaken on the conceptualisation and role of libraries in the Vocational Educational and Training (VET) sector.

Much has happened at the government level. In Victorian government policy and visioning there has been a fundamental re-examination of the VET sector with the purpose of “transforming the VET system from one that relates to an industrially based economy to one that assists firms to compete in the innovation economy and assists communities and individuals to gain the skills they need for the future” (Kosky 2002). Similar developments have also occurred in other states and VET policy has also been a focus of Commonwealth government attention, in reports such as “Shaping our future: Australia’s national strategy for vocational education and training 2004-2010” (Australian National Training Authority 2004) and “Skilling Australia: New directions for Vocation Education and Training” (Australian Department of Education, Science and Training 2005).

Yet nowhere has there been a corresponding re-assessment of the knowledge resource systems traditionally provided by TAFE library and IT services. This reveals a mismatch between the government vision for VET and the current status of services which are needed to support this vision. It clearly identifies an urgent need for re-alignment between knowledge resource systems and the wider VET strategies, in the interests of VET users, and of all other stakeholders in government, business and civil society.

Concurrent with these developments, there has been an emergence in the wider information and knowledge management community of the concept of an information commons, also known as a learning or knowledge commons. Whilst these terms appear to be used interchangeably at times, there are some theoretical differences between them.
The Commons Models

Information Commons
The idea of an information commons draws on the historical existence of the English commons--pieces of land to which members of a community had specific rights of access to meet important human needs. We all rely on common resources in order to live, and we expect to maintain them as a society and to have access to them by virtue of our membership in a general community (American Library Association, 2002).

An additional impetus for a commons model in relation to information lies in the unprecedented possibilities for human creativity, global communication, and access to information provided by the internet, yet often jealously guarded by mass media companies, thus preventing access by many within society (Kranich 2004).

In a way which echoes the traditional commons model, an information commons ensures open access to ideas and the opportunity to use them, by providing a structure which promotes sharing, community and equal access to information (Bradley, 2004).

Learning Commons
Whilst most information commons are based on a partnership between the library and information technology services of an institution to provide information and IT services for staff and students, it is seen as still essentially library-centric. The learning commons builds on this beginning of the commons model and its primary focus on technology, and promotes the facilitation of learning by many other means.

The learning commons represents a greater functional integration of learning support within an academic setting, by becoming one of the main educational partners in supporting students (Keating & Gabb, 2005). Brown and Long (2005) discussed the shift from information commons to learning commons as a model distinguished by a focus on student learning, information creation, integrated campus services, social learning spaces and the integration of technology with a wide range of human activities including eating, discussing, writing, drawing, thinking, being social, and being private.
Knowledge Commons

A knowledge commons offers a broader focus than either the information or learning commons models as it includes situations where the community at large creates knowledge and shares it online in a way that is not necessarily geared towards learning, but may be for entertainment, social memory and group identity.

Learning Commons as chosen model

It is believed that the role of a learning commons within an academic environment is the model which captures the essence of the role of the TAFE library and its mission in general. For this reason, the learning commons model was the one chosen as the focus of this research project and for possible adoption by TAFE libraries in Victoria.

As more academic institutions are creating informal spaces to encourage students to mingle, collaborate, share and network with other students and institute staff, there is a need to look at how the model can be delivered in practice (Spencer 2006). For example, is the learning commons a place inside the library, the library itself, or a harmonizing facility which serves as a complementary learning space outside of the library in a space of its own?

A literature review was conducted and further developed in preparation for the research project, in relation to the Learning Commons. To see these papers, see the “Further Reading” section in the references section of this report, or go to the Resources page of the project wiki at http://www.vatl-learningcommons.com/resources.html.

Vocational Education and Training in Australia

A directions paper prepared by the Australian Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST, 2005) acknowledges the enormous contribution the Vocational Education and Training system has made to Australia’s economic success, and also identifies the need for the system to build on its success and ensure continuous improvement in providing skilled people required by industry and business to keep strong economic growth a reality. This report identifies skills shortages and ageing
populations as global phenomena for mature economies, and outlines the need for a responsive VET system to build on Australia’s highly skilled workforce in order to compete in an internationally competitive market. Growing expectations of learners, coupled with the need for life-long learning, present new challenges to educators.

A report prepared by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA, 2003) outlines Australia’s national strategy for vocational education and training for the period 2004-2010. There are a range of values which clients seek from providers in this education sector. These values include: providing clear links between learning, skills development and employment; seeking customized products and services to meet particular client needs; and establishing and maintaining active measures to address barriers to learning. These are all values which are also important to library services within the VET Sector and which they are continuously striving to incorporate within the service they provide to all their stakeholders.

This national strategy claims to be more clearly focused on clients, and aims to make vocational education and training fully client-driven. It recognises the need to change thinking to balance the focus on training young people for work, with the retraining needs of existing and older workers, and also acknowledges the growing significance of knowledge and the ability to handle new literacy demands, innovation and the ability to develop and apply new technologies. The report highlights the important role that education and training professionals have to play in shaping future policy, especially around teaching, learning and assessment, as TAFEs of the future will face additional change as the training market continues to evolve.

These arguments and proposed strategies are all indicators that a learning commons model is well placed to provide an appropriate resource to support and complement the educational needs of students within such a client-driven and dynamically evolving national education sector. The visions of VET policy and the learning commons model are very compatible. Whilst the strategy set by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) and the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) frame National policy and directions, they also challenge States and Territories to take a cooperative and collaborative approach.
**Vocational Education and Training in Victoria**

The Victorian government’s response to this challenge is framed in a statement by Victorian Minister for Education and Training (Kosky 2002), which investigated the future directions for the Victorian vocational education and training system. The minister suggests that the approach should be based on pursuing excellence in VET programs and services; innovation in training delivery; and better access for communities, individuals and business to lifelong learning that suits their circumstances. She suggests that VET has adopted greater flexibility in learning, particularly through the increased use of technology, but it is still vital that planning, accountability and resourcing arrangements are reshaped to ensure TAFE Institutes can continue to innovate and respond in flexible ways to their clients’ needs. The statement also identifies that a particular response is required, one that addresses the need for innovative practices in training delivery by seeking the development of new learning environments, which incorporate innovative learning materials, technologies and curriculums.

The report acknowledges the skill level of the TAFE workforce, and advocates the need for this workforce to take a leading role in the creation of new knowledge, through design, research and development activities. This process of knowledge creation can also be facilitated by further development and management of new collaborations, entrepreneurial partnerships and international relationships.

In summary, what do these policies mean for libraries and library professionals working within the VET sector in Victoria? The report concludes that all those who have an interest in a high-quality VET system in Victoria should take the time to consider the matters raised and become part of the process of change. This research project investigates the best means to achieve constructive change.

**Victorian TAFE Libraries in 2007**

The Victorian Association of TAFE Libraries (VATL) currently has 19 member libraries consisting of: fourteen libraries in stand-alone TAFEs; four from dual-sector Universities, and one (City Library) which combines CAE and public library services. Dual-sector
Universities usually have integrated Higher Education and TAFE library services. The locations and accompanying details are outlined in tables 1 & 2 below.

Table 1: Standalone TAFEs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TAFE Institute</th>
<th>No. of Library sites</th>
<th>Locations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Charleston Road, Bendigo McCrae Street, Bendigo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box Hill Institute of TAFE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Elgar Campus Library Elgar Campus Engineering Library Nelson Campus Library Whitehorse Campus Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Gippsland TAFE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yallourn Morwell Warragul Leongatha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chisholm Institute of TAFE</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Dandenong Berwick Cranbourne Frankston Rosebud Bass Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Library</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Joint Use CAE / Yarra Public Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Gippsland Institute of TAFE</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bairnsdale Sale Forestech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gordon Institute of TAFE</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>City Campus Library (Geelong) East Campus Library (Geelong)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Wangaratta (joint use with High Country Public Library) Shepparton (Joint use with La Trobe University)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holmesglen Institute of TAFE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chadstone Building 8 Chadstone Building 5 Moorabbin Waverley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kangan-Batman Institute of TAFE</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Broadmeadows Craigieburn Essendon Moreland Coburg Richmond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Preston Collingwood Epping Fairfield Greensborough Heidelberg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-West Institute of TAFE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Warmambool Hamilton Portland Glen Ormiston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunraysia Institute of TAFE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Joint Use facility with La Trobe University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Angliss Institute of TAFE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wodonga Institute of TAFE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Joint Use facility with La Trobe University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong></td>
<td><strong>This includes 1 TAFE plus Public Library</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2: Dual Sector Universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>No. of Library Sites</th>
<th>Campus Locations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RMIT University</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Carlton&lt;br&gt;Brunswick&lt;br&gt;Swanston&lt;br&gt;Business&lt;br&gt;Bundoora East&lt;br&gt;Bundoora West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria University of Technology</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>City-Flinders&lt;br&gt;City-King&lt;br&gt;City-Queen&lt;br&gt;Footscray-Nicholson&lt;br&gt;Footscray Park&lt;br&gt;Melton&lt;br&gt;Newport&lt;br&gt;St Albans&lt;br&gt;Sunbury&lt;br&gt;Sunshine&lt;br&gt;Werribee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swinburne University of Technology</td>
<td>5 (Victoria)&lt;br&gt;1 (Offshore)</td>
<td>Hawthorn&lt;br&gt;Prahran&lt;br&gt;Wantirna&lt;br&gt;Croydon&lt;br&gt;Lilydale&lt;br&gt;Sarawak-Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Ballarat</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mt Helen&lt;br&gt;Horsham&lt;br&gt;Stawell&lt;br&gt;SMB-School of Mines, Ballarat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td>Offering integrated services to TAFE &amp; Higher Education students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Research prior to the Search Conference

It is important to get a brief picture of the current knowledge about the Victorian TAFE sector in relation to library services and information provision. To this end, three forms of measurement were utilised. Firstly, comparison was made of the advances made between 2002 and 2005, by using statistics gathered by VATL for these years (to view the raw data, please go to [www.vatl.org.au](http://www.vatl.org.au)). The second form of measurement involved preparing and circulating a questionnaire to all VATL members, to get a feel for how library professionals within this sector viewed the current situation (the questionnaire is included as Appendix 1A of this report). The third form of measurement involved a
follow-up questionnaire to try to elicit further detail which was unclear or inconclusive from the first questionnaire (this is included as Appendix 1B).

**Comparison using VATL statistics**

The years 2002 and 2005 were covered by the Victorian government report “Knowledge and skills for the innovation economy”. The researchers wanted to know whether there was any noticeable difference between service levels in the four-year period covered, which flowed on to library services and information provision within the sector, which may be attributable to government policy.

Decisions needed to be made in the extrapolation of results, due to some inconsistencies in reporting of the statistics. VATL consists of nineteen member libraries, of which five are dual sector libraries (servicing both Higher Education and TAFE students), six are standalone city TAFEs, seven are regional TAFEs, and one is part of a joint use facility with a Public Library. The statistics for the single joint-use member were not used, as only averages for each group were thought relevant. Some figures appeared to be inconsistent with each other, (for example, there were some inconsistencies in counting databases, as some libraries counted number of databases, whilst others counted individual titles covered by the databases). In these cases, it was decided to leave out the inconsistent ones and use the remaining ones in order to obtain a more accurate mean figure.

The most meaningful yet measurable statistics which have been use for comparison are: opening hours; library staff numbers; student contact hours; computers available; library collection size; and the amount spent on electronic resources. This key data set is represented in Table Three below. By using these statistics a picture emerges, not only of changes in TAFE libraries over the four year period, but also the disparity between the different TAFE categories. Each of these comparisons will be discussed individually below.
Table 3: VATL Statistics on TAFE Libraries, 2002 and 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>DUAL SECTOR</th>
<th>CITY TAFE</th>
<th>REGIONAL TAFE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening Hours</td>
<td>57.6  61.8</td>
<td>60.9  61.0</td>
<td>61.7  52.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total library staff(EFT)</td>
<td>27.3  41.5</td>
<td>26.6  25.5</td>
<td>7.3  7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Institute Staff</td>
<td>683.5 499</td>
<td>808.8 816</td>
<td>292  282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total student contact hours</td>
<td>6,031,301 7,181,485</td>
<td>7,198,144 6,874,967</td>
<td>2,082,225 2,020,687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Workstations</td>
<td>134  247</td>
<td>152  166</td>
<td>32  36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print items</td>
<td>180,351 182,374</td>
<td>74,215 70,855</td>
<td>38,879 62,069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print Serial titles</td>
<td>1,358 1,292</td>
<td>804 705</td>
<td>737 330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic resources expenditure</td>
<td>$230,830 $26,241</td>
<td>$50,464 $15,464</td>
<td>$18,928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total expenditure - all resources</td>
<td>$530,688 $185,754</td>
<td>$1,530,241 $65,265</td>
<td>$529,022</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student Contact Hours**

As shown in Table 3 above, from 2002 to 2005 student contact hours have increased in the dual sector by an average of 19% (from 6,031,301 hours to 7,181,485 hours), whereas the city TAFEs have fallen by 4.5% (7,198,144 hours to 6,874,967 hours) and regional TAFEs by 2.9% (2,082,225 hours to 2,020,687 hours). These figures seem to be at odds with government hopes to increase the number of students in TAFE by 2005, particularly in the regional areas, although these figures do not show age groups. The government aim to increase the number of young people aged 15-19 in rural and regional Victoria engaged in education and training by 6% (Kosky, 2002), is not being achieved. In fact, the overall number is actually decreasing overall, but it is not clear whether this decrease relates to any one age group within this particular cohort.

**Library Staff Numbers**

Library staff numbers have increased in the dual sector libraries on average 52% (27.3 to 31.5 EFT in 2002 and 2005 respectively), but have actually fallen in both city TAFES (26.6 to 25.5 EFT) and regional TAFES (7.3 to 7 EFT) by an average in both areas of 4%. In the case of city TAFEs, the decrease appears to be roughly in line with the
decrease in student contact hours, but in the case of regional TAFEs, the decrease seems to be disproportionate to the change in student contact hours.

**Library opening hours**

Comparing 2002 to 2005 figures, library opening hours have increased in the dual sector libraries on average by 7% (from 57.6 hours in 2002 to 61.8 hours in 2005), stayed fairly constant in city TAFEs (with a slight increase of just over 1%, from 60.9 to 61 hours), but decreased in regional TAFEs by 15% (from 61.7 to 52.4 hours). The figure of opening hours is an important measure, when looking at access and availability issues, and these figures are a real concern for regional TAFEs. With the decrease in staff numbers, it is difficult to see how this problem can be addressed in the short term.

Unfortunately, having fewer students does not mean that these students need less access to library services, but the decrease in library opening hours is possibly linked to the decrease in student numbers, which makes electronic access even more important if the issue of access is to be addressed in a meaningful way.

**Number of Student Computers in the Library**

The number of student computers has increased across all sectors, with the largest increase in the dual sector of 84% (from 134 workstations in 2002 to 247 in 2005), followed by regional TAFEs with an average increase of 12.5% (32 to 36 workstations), whilst city TAFEs experienced an average increase of 9% (152 to 166 workstations). However, the dual sector and city TAFEs had a much higher average number to begin with (152 compared to regional TAFEs’ 32).

Whilst the overall increase in the number of computer workstations is a positive step, it is difficult to see how these can make a real difference in the long term, when regional TAFEs, in particular, are experiencing a decrease in the opening hours when these computers can be accessed.

**Library Collection Size**

Whilst the number of books within library collections has changed over the four year period, it is the number of print serials which has shown the greatest impact of the new electronic forms available.
Dual sector libraries experienced a modest 1% average increase in the number of print books in their collections (180,351 to 182,374 items), whilst City TAFEs actually experienced an overall average decrease of 4.5% (74,215 to 70,855 items), yet the biggest change in this comparison is in the regional TAFEs which experienced an average increase of 60% in the overall size of their book collections (38,879 to 62,069 items).

The size of the print collection for journals decreased in all sectors, but by varying amounts, with the dual sector libraries averaging a decrease of 5% (1,358 to 1,292 titles) city TAFEs by 12% (804 to 705), and again the biggest change in this measure is by regional TAFEs, who showed an average decrease of 55% (737 to 330). This figure for regional TAFEs suggests that in trying to balance a resource budget (which is obviously limited), hard decisions were made in relation to collections, as the increase shown in the size of the book collection almost corresponds to the decrease in the size of the journal collection. This indicates that with the same amount of money allocated to purchasing resources, an increase in any one area needs to be balanced by a decrease in another area.

**Expenditure on Electronic Resources**

In comparing the statistics available in this measure (for the purposes of this research, electronic resources only includes journal databases, not electronic books), it was necessary to exclude the dual sector libraries, as they find it difficult to differentiate between the amount spent on electronic resources between the higher education and TAFE sectors, as all students have access to the same databases.

The disparity between the city and regional TAFEs is quite marked, with city TAFEs increasing their spending by an average of 92% ($26,241 to $50,464), but regional TAFEs were only able to increase their spending in this area by a more modest average of 22% ($15,464 to $18,928).

**Consortia Database Subscriptions for TAFE**

Larger TAFE Libraries and those within Multi-Sectoral Universities have long had access to a range of subscription online information products that smaller TAFE Libraries cannot
generally afford. As a means of addressing this inequity, through its representation on the TAFE Libraries Australia Group, VATL have been part of a reference group of Australian library sectoral representatives who’ve been striving for a national licensing scheme for online database subscriptions since 2003. In May 2007, Electronic Resources Australia (ERA) (http://era.nla.gov.au/) was launched as a not-for-profit Australian library consortium, currently administered by the National Library of Australia. Though in its infancy, the scheme eventually may become Australia’s largest library consortium and offer a way for small budget TAFE Libraries to ‘opt in’ to online database subscriptions at more affordable prices. However, feedback from TAFE Librarians suggests that the current selection of database titles on offer through ERA, are not the titles most sought by TAFE Libraries.

Measuring Customer Satisfaction in TAFE Libraries
During 2006, a VATL working group was formed to look at how the standard RODSKI\(^1\) client satisfaction survey might be able to be customised for TAFE Libraries. The survey provides a useful means of identifying which library services users find important, and how well the Library is performing in these areas. It also highlights where improvement is required, which can assist future decision making. It also provides a valuable means of benchmarking against libraries in Australia and New Zealand, who participate in the survey, as well as tracking the library’s progress between surveys.

Discussions with Ambit Insights - the administrators of the RODSKI survey - indicated that a modified basic version could be run for approximately $2,500 per TAFE or $4000 for the online option if enough TAFE library members were interested. Currently all the multi-sectoral Universities conduct the RODSKI survey biennially through a Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL) consortia arrangement, and several of the larger, stand-alone TAFEs have independently conducted the survey. Smaller TAFEs however have experienced difficulty in obtaining funding, despite the possibility of using a customised, less expensive survey.

\(^1\)RODSKI Surveys and Ambit Insights have recently been incorporated into INSYNC Surveys, see: http://www.insyncsurveys.com.au/Products/?product=LibrarySurveys
The need for more TAFE Libraries within Victoria and possibly nationally to use the RODSKI Survey as a customer satisfaction and benchmarking tool is seen as an issue which should be pursued as a means of promoting continuous improvements within the Sector.

**Questionnaire results**

One of the aims of this research project was to address the challenges facing TAFE libraries in the contemporary environment. A theoretical concept of the knowledge commons was originally applied to the project, with a later shift towards the learning commons, to provide greater emphasis on the role of learning in tertiary libraries.

As part of the project, two questionnaires were devised and circulated to librarians and other library staff from Victorian TAFE libraries. This section of the report aims to provide an analysis of the findings from these questionnaires, aligning them with the overall aims of the research study.

**The study**

The first questionnaire (Appendix 1A) was designed to investigate perceptions of current library staff in the following areas: staffing, changes in service provision, physical facilities, availability and access, as well as educational and organisational challenges. A total of 43 responses were received from the first questionnaire, which reinforced its validity as a statistical study. There were no invalid or null responses, and all questionnaires that were distributed were returned. There was strong interest amongst library staff in the research aims of the study, and the opportunity to participate in the discourse around the research.

As a result of the feedback received from the first questionnaire, a second questionnaire was created (Appendix 1B), reflecting a scaled-down version of the first questionnaire but addressing salient issues more deeply. The second questionnaire was circulated before and after the search conference, again to librarians and other library staff. Although there were only five responses, findings from the second questionnaire were qualitative in nature and were used to enrich the findings from the first questionnaire.
The selection of librarians and library staff to participate in the study is a necessity. Recognised as gatekeepers, they are involved in direct interactions with library users and patrons, and through other work-related roles, they are also informed about backend operations. Soliciting their views provides an important viewpoint.

In the next section, combined findings from the questionnaires are presented and analysed according to the themes identified by the study.

**Findings and Analysis**

In the initial construction of the first questionnaire, insights from the literature were used to identify emerging issues that were most relevant to TAFE libraries. Some of this literature was posted on the project wiki by TAFE Librarians throughout the project, and the rest can be found in the reference list contained within this report.

**Staffing**

A consistent issue that came up during research project meetings has been the need for multi-skilled staff in the libraries. How could this need be met in the future, as perceived by library staff?

The fact that the scope of staff roles has changed over the last decade in TAFE libraries was affirmed by overwhelming agreement by survey participants. This is shown by figure 1, where 65% of the participants strongly agreed and 33% of the participants agreed that the scope of staff roles have changed in the last decade.

![Figure 1: The scope of staff roles in TAFE libraries have changed over the last 10 years](image-url)
Along with this perception, other implicit questions were asked, such as whether or not new positions were needed in TAFE libraries, as well as questions addressing the adequacy of training and professional development, and the need for multi-skilled staff. To all of these questions, similar responses were observed. While it was maintained that new positions were as needed as multi-skilled staff, and there needs to be more training and professional development courses for TAFE librarians and library staff, further insights were also provided. There was also some hesitation observed. One participant commented on this, saying

*All we need are revised position descriptions – not necessarily new positions.*

There was inadequate training and professional development courses to support the acquisition of skills and knowledge required by staff. This inadequacy was clarified by one participant, who explained that there were simply not enough development courses targeted at TAFE librarians and staff. There were several comments that computing skills and knowledge of developments on the Internet such as social software (blogs, wikis, RSS, etc) were desired.

Some challenges were also identified, especially from regional institutions. One participant from a standalone regional TAFE library commented:

*At regional TAFE there is never enough budget to cover the staffing we think is needed.*

In the follow-up questionnaire, it was also observed that the number of staff – both full-time and part-time – was also much lower in regional and standalone TAFE libraries. Although they serve communities that are perhaps smaller in size, it was recognised that there were benefits to be gained by external collaboration with other TAFE libraries and community organisations, and internal collaboration between functional departments within the Institute. An example was provided by a participant from another regional TAFE library:

*A formal liaison service to departments and Admin areas was established 3 years ago. It has broken down barriers and increased dialogue and collaboration. We also administer the loan of data projectors, laptops, digital*
cameras and special needs equipment which has brought more staff into the library. Promotion and facilitation of information literacy sessions, referencing workshops etc., has lifted our profile within teaching departments – most now come to us to arrange specific sessions for students. Our small staff also researches and compiles a monthly Board of Studies Education Update of current events affecting VET in Australia and overseas.

This example demonstrated how internal collaboration between departments in a small regional TAFE, can assist a library to provide the collaboration needed by the institution to make up for its lack of resources and multi-skilled staff.

Another challenge addressed the need for management support in staffing changes. As stated by a participant:

\[\textit{Roles have changed within the library sector, and these need to be recognised by upper management.}\]

Whether or not this was a significant issue across all TAFE libraries, and what causal relationships with staffing issues there may be, were not investigated by this study. An interesting area to study in future research is presented.

\textbf{Sharing}

The focus on community-centred services also implied a shift to greater collaboration with other institutions and libraries. Libraries that adopted the learning commons framework are integrated spaces, often implying collaborations between departments such as information technology and learning services with the library. The study aimed to investigate whether collaborative arrangements were commonplace in TAFE libraries.

While there was general consensus that greater collaboration can be observed with other institutions, internal departments, and libraries, a significant proportion of responses to the first survey indicated that library managers and librarians were not in agreement that this was the case. These responses can be found in figure 2.
Neither Agree nor Disagree 30%
Agree 46%
Strongly Agree 12%
Disagree 12%
Neither Agree nor Disagree

Figure 2: In my own library, I have observed a shift to greater collaboration with other libraries, institutions, and/or internal departments.

This perspective was contrasted with responses to whether or not such collaboration was desirable and needed to enhance the quality of library services and resources. Figure 3 displays the responses to this question.

Disagree 2%
Strongly Agree 33%
Neither Agree nor Disagree 14%
Agree 49%

Figure 3: More collaboration needs to happen with other institutions, libraries, and/or internal departments to enhance the quality of library services and resources.

This time, there is a greater percentage of responses that agreed or strongly agreed that collaboration was desirable in order to enhance the quality of services and resources. This implied that more needed to be done towards enhancing both external and internal collaboration, and further dialogue is desirable to achieve this.

After gathering findings from the first survey, researchers wanted to delve deeper on the issue of collaboration in TAFE libraries. In the follow-up survey questionnaire, participants were asked for existing and future/desired collaboration in key identified
areas of services and resources, such as database access, reciprocal borrowing, inter-library loans, technical services and processes.

Responses indicated some collaboration in some areas, but not all – with the exception of a standalone TAFE library located in the metropolitan area. Out of the five responses, two responses were from TAFE libraries located in the city and it was observed that both had indicated that collaborative approaches were already adopted in their libraries in various functional areas of service provision and resources. Unfortunately, this was not the case for TAFE libraries in the regional areas, especially standalone ones. More could be done to facilitate collaboration and the sharing of resources with other libraries and institutions for libraries in regional TAFEs. This brings up the wider problem of a gulf that exists between regional and city TAFE libraries, and the divide between joint use and dual sector, and standalone TAFE libraries. A participant from a regional standalone TAFE library responded to the discussions on electronic resources, staffing, services, and other developments in TAFE libraries with the following:

*The above all sounds like fantasy. We don’t have the funds to purchase more electronic resources, open for longer hours, and we don’t have multiple site licenses at this stage. Is this a TAFE in Victoria?*

It was found that TAFE libraries located in the metropolitan area, and joint-use or dual sector in setup, often gain the benefit of having access to resources that are available in the higher education sector. It is recommended that a consortium of shared databases, where multiple site licenses are negotiated with providers, might be beneficial. Another participant effectively pointed out that while such collaboration may be beneficial to enable access to electronic resources, there is also a divide in literacy; which also needs to be addressed.

*Resources and technologies are being used, but not to their full potential and there is still a gap between knowing about these technologies, having access to them, and using them on a regular basis to assist with service provision such as reference enquiries.*

However, some skepticism exists, as one participant expressed the uncertainty on collaboration being the answer to resolve challenges faced by TAFE libraries.
Not sure if collaboration on an operational basis is going to resolve dilemmas across all TAFE libraries.

While collaboration facilitates the sharing of knowledge, services, and resources between TAFE libraries and other institutions, and its benefits have been acknowledged, it is recognised that it should form part of a larger strategy and not the sole solution.

**Services**

Early in the study, there was a general sentiment expressed by many project members\(^2\) that there have been significant changes to the provision of services by TAFE libraries. Such changes were said to be brought about by trends in the broader education sector of TAFE institutions, technological impacts, and changing demographics, knowledge and skills of user communities. This implied a need to study the changes in services in TAFE libraries.

As a start, participants were asked if they have observed an increase in the availability of services and facilities in TAFE libraries. A large majority of the participants responded in agreement, as seen in figure 4.

![Figure 4: Generally, there is an increase in the availability of services and facilities in TAFE libraries](image)

This was affirmed by responses to another question, which asked if TAFE libraries are creating new services in response to changes in the environment. These responses can

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\(^2\) Please see Acknowledgements section for list of project members
be found in figure 5. A large percentage of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

![Pie chart showing responses to a statement about TAFE libraries creating new services.]

Figure 5: TAFE libraries are creating new services in response to changes in the environment.

While this indicated that there have been attempts in revising services in TAFE libraries in order to accommodate changes in the communities, it does not necessarily imply that services are current and reflective of the actual needs of the communities. This was appropriately affirmed by one participant, who simply noted:

_There is an increase in services, but no dropping off outdated services._

Revision and examination of services are clearly required. Re-assessment would better optimise limited resources in these libraries.

The impacts of information and communication technologies were also significant in shaping the services and resources provided by TAFE libraries. Whilst there are problems, as identified earlier, in keeping up with technological changes and effectively using them on a daily basis, participants also expressed how they perceive the Web and information and communication technologies as important and integral to the total service offerings of TAFE libraries. The responses to a statement about the effective use of the Web to enhance existing services reflect this significance (see figure 6).
One participant also noted how the availability of resources on the Web and open access to quality resources, and communication technologies, have become an asset to TAFE libraries, especially those that are poorly funded.

*Google was a godsend for the poorly funded library. Teaching students to critically analyse information GOOGLED has been a primary objective.*

Although this was a positive observation, participants still pointed out the presence of a divide between TAFE libraries in the area of electronic resources and databases.

*The gulf between the electronic resources “rich” and the “poor” is really noticeable in TAFE libraries, particularly small stand-alone TAFEs, which can’t provide the same access.*

Again, this implied a strong need for a consortium of electronic resources, to allow greater and cheaper access for TAFE libraries.

**Spaces**

The study of the learning commons model brought up many examples of libraries that included a physical transformation of its spaces to reflect the integrated services and collaboration enabled by the framework.

Responses affirmed that physical transformations of spaces and facilities were indeed observed in TAFE libraries over the last decade. Due to the earlier study of collaboration,
undertaken in the first survey, researchers were interested to know if such transformations included communal, interactive and open spaces; and whether such spaces were perceived to be effective. As seen in figures 7 and 8, there was strong consensus from participants on both statements.

Figure 7: The physical spaces of the library have changed over the years to include more communal, interactive and open spaces

Figure 8: Communal, interactive and open spaces are more effective for the library users and staff of today

In addition to these responses, participants provided further insights on related issues. One participant pointed out that spaces need to be more flexible than ever, to accommodate the multiple purposes of learning and diverse interactions of user communities:

Spaces should be more flexible and social. Real one-stop shops for student support and integration of services.
Although it was recognised that communal spaces are now a necessity, it was also recognised that individual spaces are still in demand. As summarised by one participant:

There is the need for communal spaces; however, silent study places are still in demand.

Communal spaces enable students to inspire one another, while individual spaces are necessary for personal development. Both types of spaces are important in the shaping of knowledge, through peace and self-reflection made meaningful by interacting with others, and contributing to a collective pool of knowledge through participation. Self-knowledge has never been a separable construction, according to Castells (2004), and as communities come together they inevitably construct self-knowledge, which point to the interdependencies between the self and the community – implying the interdependency between individual and communal spaces.

Several participants also noted the demand for computing and network facilities as part of the spaces provided by TAFE libraries. As one participant noted,

It seems we never have enough computers!

This was also intricately associated with funding issues – that access to computers and electronic resources are often restricted by inadequate funding and space. Demand for electronic resources and networked computers has significantly increased. Wireless networks are desirable, allowing users to gain access to electronic resources on personal devices, without relying on computers provided by the library. Lack of funding, however, is an issue that TAFE libraries have to deal with, especially in standalone regional libraries. The relevance of wireless services and the option of remote access is still questionable in small regional libraries, as noted by another participant:

Given the socio-economic climate of the client group, library users do not generally have the means to purchase laptops or have broadband connectivity at home – remote use is often not an option.
At the same time, one participant noted the increasing importance on the attractiveness of spaces:

*Physical environment appears more and more important for students – TAFE library as a pleasant, attractive, safe environment with appropriate levels of student support (particularly for international students).*

The emphasis on the library as a refuge for users extends the role of the library beyond its function of providing access to resources and related services.

**Shifts**

Of all the challenges facing TAFE libraries, technological challenges were the most apparent, showing the need for staff to acquire technological skills and knowledge, tools to be purchased to enable remote access to resources, and the integration of IT support with library services. Some of these challenges have already been addressed in earlier discussion. Figure 9 shows perceptions of the importance of technical support as part of the services offered by TAFE libraries.

![Figure 9: Technical support is an essential service of the TAFE library.](chart)

It might be surmised that a causal relationship exists between factors associated with technological trends: increase in the demand for computing literacy in staff, the integration of technical services as part of the total service offering of TAFE libraries, and the recognised need for wireless services and computing facilities. A possible causal relationship between these three factors was studied using correlation analysis, to
measure significant relationships and interdependencies between factors. The results of the analysis can be found in Table 4.

Table 4: Correlation Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>STAFF-LIT</th>
<th>IT-SERVICE</th>
<th>IT-FACILITIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STAFF-LIT</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.564**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Staff computing literacy]</td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT-SERVICE</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.564**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[importance of IT services to library]</td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT-FACILITIES</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.097*</td>
<td>.360**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Need for computing facilities]</td>
<td></td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

STAFF_LIT represents the demand for computing literacy and skills in staff, IT_SERVICE represents the perceived importance of technological services as part of the total services offered by TAFE libraries, and IT_FACILITIES represents the perceived need for computing facilities (including wireless services). The Pearson correlation is a calculated statistic of two factors. Measurements of significance are then derived based on this calculated statistic. In this analysis, confidence levels of 95% (0.05) and 99% (0.01) are used. In other words, significance measurements lower than 0.05 imply a significant relationship between two factors at 95% confidence level; while significance measurements lower than 0.01 imply a significant relationship between two factors at 99% confidence level. This also means that relationships that are significant at 99% confidence levels are also relatively stronger than those that are significant at 95%.

The results show that there are significant correlations between all three factors, using a 95% confidence level. This affirmed the proposition that causal relationships exist between factors associated with technological trends. Although all of these correlations...
are significant, the results also indicated stronger relationships at 99% confidence level between STAFF-LIT and IT-SERVICE, and IT-SERVICE and IT-FACILITIES.

The demand for computing literacy and skills in staff, and the perceived importance of technological services as part of the total services offered by TAFE libraries were strongly correlated with each other, with 99% confidence level indicated by the significance measurement. This meant that the higher the demand for staff computing literacy, the higher the importance placed on technological services as part of the library. This relationship works recursively, indicating that the higher the perceived importance placed on technological services as part of the library, the higher the demand for staff computing literacy.

The second significant relationship lies in the perceived importance of technological services as part of the total services offered by TAFE libraries, and the perceived need for computing facilities. The higher the perceived importance on technological services as part of the total service offerings of TAFE libraries is, the higher the perceived need for computing facilities. Again, this relationship is recursive, meaning that the importance on computing facilities also imply a higher perceived importance on offering technological services together with computing facilities.

The last relationship between the demand for computing literacy and skills in staff (STAFF-LIT) and the perceived need for computing facilities (IT-FACILITIES) was also significant at 95% confidence level, although it is a relatively weaker relationship than the other two relationships discussed earlier (STAFF-LIT and IT-SERVICE, and IT-SERVICE and IT-FACILITIES).

Other than the broader trend of technological uptake by libraries, changing perspectives on education and learning frameworks were also found to be significant. The ability of TAFE libraries to adapt quickly and readily to changes in the education sphere was pointed out in the following comment by a participant in the study:

*TAFE courses appear to change more readily with community needs and expectations than universities, so we need to evolve continually.*
Changes in the sphere of further education also point to the urgency for TAFE libraries to examine their roles closely, and be proactive in addressing challenges arising from these changes. This was expressed by a participant from a relatively large TAFE institution located in metropolitan Melbourne:

   According to our TAFE Director, we are looking at a big shake-up in the provision of further education – that hasn’t been seen for 20 years. Libraries need to know what they want, and to act quickly to reap the benefits of this edge. We need to be able to use the momentum of the force of this change to get what we need for students and staff.

Conclusions from the surveys

Significant findings emerged from the two questionnaires distributed to library staff. While serving as constructive responses in their own right prior to the Search Conference, the outcomes of the surveys served to inform the themes of the conference.
Section 2 - The Search Conference

After the preliminary studies – the literature review and surveys – the Search Conference was organised on the premise that there are urgent issues of professional concern in relation to the provision of library services and information provision in the Vocational Education Sector, which could be actively discussed and resolutions sought.

At the beginning of the research project, based on the preliminary studies, six issues were identified:

1. How to choose an appropriate Commons model and identification of its implications for TAFE Libraries.
2. Ensuring well-skilled staff – looking at staff development in the light of the changing scope of staff roles and the need for new positions in TAFE libraries.
3. Capitalising on collaborative services – looking at the role of collaboration between partners for mutual benefit.
4. Managing new physical facilities, as they are transformed towards the commons model.
5. Increasing availability and access, including access to more physical and electronic resources for the whole student cohort.
6. Keeping up with educational and organisational change, in line with changing perspectives on education and the role of TAFE libraries.

Preparation

The original six issues were further defined and narrowed down in order to form the eventual list for discussion at the Search Conference. The final list of issues for discussion is as follows:

1. Staff Development.
2. Collaboration for mutual benefit.
3. Physical environment.
4. Availability and access.
5. Keeping up with change.
Methodologically, a search conference is “a large-group task-oriented conversation” (Emery & Punsen, 1996) which aims to identify issues of concern to all stakeholders – managers and other employees alike. All opinions are shared in the melting-pot of vigorous, recorded discussion. Then the researchers tease out the core themes and propose recommendations for action.

**Search Conference Format**

Keynote speakers were invited to present papers to stimulate thoughtful discussion around the themes previously identified.

The first three speakers were chosen for their individual expertise in relation to the role of TAFE, Education and the Commons Model itself. The second group of three speakers, comprised library and information practitioners, currently working within the TAFE sector in three different categories: dual sector (University and TAFE), Metropolitan TAFE, and Regional TAFE. These three categories were chosen, as they each offer a different perspective of information provision within the TAFE environment as well as presenting a different range of issues and opportunities. The full presentations from each of these speakers are included in Appendix 2, at the end of this report.

The first keynote speaker, Bruce Mackenzie, Chief Executive, Holmesglen Institute of TAFE, provided background on the future directions of TAFE in Australia and the potential role of libraries within this framework. Bruce was followed by Dr Allie Clemans, Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Education at Monash University, who presented a paper on “Learning Commons: A new paradigm for teaching and learning”.

Hester Mountifield, Assistant University Librarian, Information Commons and Learning Services at the University of Auckland then presented a paper entitled "Knowledge Commons". Hester Mountifield elucidating the commons concept.
“Learning Commons: concepts and experiences”.

The next group of speakers, Clare Carlsson from Swinburne University of Technology, Marion King from Holmesglen Institute of TAFE and Kay Weaver from East Gippsland Institute of TAFE each outlined their libraries’ responses and current environments, addressing the question “How well are Victorian TAFE Libraries equipped to meet the future?”

**Papers Presented**

**Current Issues and Priorities for TAFE Libraries in the Future**

Bruce Mackenzie  
Chief Executive  
Holmesglen Institute of TAFE

Bruce Mackenzie identified the main forces driving change in TAFE in Victoria. He began by outlining the policy priorities at Federal level, including the Council of Australian Governments’ (COAG) focus on human capital, with an emphasis on increasing workforce participation and improved workforce productivity. The immediate measures identified by COAG which are relevant to TAFE include establishing an outcomes-based quality framework, ensuring national consistency in licensing in targeted trade areas, and streamlining recognition of prior learning (RPL) processes.

COAG also recognises the need for greater emphasis on engagement of young people, in order to improve retention rates. A focus on collaborative relationships between training providers and industry, along with a particular emphasis on improved productivity of health sector workers are also initiatives targeted by COAG.

Enrolments in Vocational Education nationwide are in a state of decline, and school retention rates have been stagnant for some years. Mr Mackenzie questioned whether there was something wrong “with the way the product is being presented”.

Both State and Federal governments believe there is a need for a significant increase in the number of Diploma Graduates, to service the emerging service and tertiary industries
and self-employment markets. Achieving this increase will significantly change the profile of TAFE, where 67% of students are currently undertaking Certificate II and Certificate III courses. These student cohorts traditionally have not been shown to be frequent library users.

The challenges for country Institutions are particularly difficult, as they are not able to offer the range of diploma programs, which may be offered by city TAFEs, as they cannot ensure class sizes and it is hard to attract the expertise, particularly in topics such as Engineering and Biology. Technological capabilities for programs such as TAFE Virtual Campus (TAFE VC) to be provided off campus are often not sufficient, with some campuses and areas relying on dial-up internet access.

Mackenzie pointed out that education for International students is Australia’s fourth largest export, and that Victorian TAFEs are a major player in this market. This means that there is a growing cohort of students in TAFE with very different needs to those which have been traditionally serviced. Victorian TAFEs are varied, due to their independence and need to be competitive, and their students are also widely varied. Many TAFE students are also very different, economically and socially, to the higher education students, which increases the need to accommodate self-learning, classroom teaching and social interaction in a variety of ways.

Mackenzie concluded with some very challenging questions – are TAFE libraries resourced to cope with the challenges of the evolving institutions and an increase in student demand? Do we need different styles of libraries for different cohorts? Should we be exploring partnerships between TAFE Institutions to facilitate transmission of knowledge? He suggested that libraries have a big physical presence on most campuses, and they could be used for the provision of a wide range of student services and activities.
Learning Commons – A new paradigm for teaching and learning

Dr Allie Clemans
Faculty of Education
Monash University

Clemans asked how might the learning commons be brought to life? She considered the challenges presented by the transformation of the library space where teaching and learning have become pivotal in developing information literacy. If teaching and learning are now central, what should such pedagogy feature, and what might be inhibiting it?
Dr Clemans drew parallels between librarians and Community Education workers in the Adult and community Education Sector – another “Cinderella sector” whose work she argued was devalued and invisible - and that workers themselves undervalued their expertise and contribution as much as those outside the sector did.

In trying to make the connections to the Library Commons and teaching and learning within it, Dr Clemans suggested that attention should be focused as much on how the work of librarians is articulated and represented, as it does on the ways in which teaching and learning is shaped. In visualising the connections, the term “Learning Commons” conjures up a particular kind of space. It is clearly the evolution and design of a potential space that conveys particular messages about, and accommodates particular practices of, a library. It supports the idea of a learning-centred service in which technology and information literacy is integrated. The commons puts learning at its core and calls on co-operation, partnership and a particular pedagogical approach, potentially.

She then posed the question “How do we place teaching and learning at the heart of the learning commons?” An answer lay in professional identity – confident librarians who are explicit about the educational value of their practices, who can articulate the educational benefits and outcomes of their contribution. Dr Clemans concluded by saying that the problem is not that teaching and learning has never been central to a library. The new paradigm, perhaps, is that teaching and learning must gain more prominence in the work of the library for the benefits which they bring and the value they carry.
Mountifield shared insights gained from the experience of establishing a Learning Commons model at the University of Auckland. Her presentation reviewed the concept and history of the Learning Commons and the associated evolution of service models, driven by changes in technology, student demographics, pedagogy and learning space design.

Hester maintained that establishing a successful Learning Commons requires strategic thinking and positioning as well as tactical or short-term planning to ensure that the facility and associated services are strongly aligned with the institutional mission, strategy and values. It is necessary to ask some basic questions, such as:

✓ What are the institutional priorities and does the library play a role in setting those priorities?
✓ How well do we as Librarians know our students?
✓ What types of physical and virtual spaces will enable learning?
✓ How proactive is the library’s learning support?
✓ How interactive is the library’s learning environment?
✓ Does the library have an infrastructure that enables pervasive learning?

In reporting on the drivers of the Learning Commons model, she suggests that technology and the need for collaborative and social learning strategies are important, but she also used the term “built pedagogy”, to describe learning spaces, and the ways the use of space within a building can encourage learning.

She outlined what she saw as strategic and operational elements of the Learning Commons. The strategic element is defined by what type of buy-in there is from the stakeholders, whereas the operational elements include the physical, virtual and learning environments, as well as the service, social and management functions of the facility.
The physical environment includes elements such as flexible design, a variety of space, booking systems to provide fair access, and challenges of managing quiet and noisy spaces (for example the University of Auckland provides students with ear plugs). The virtual environment ranges from the information technology infrastructure to questioning the relationship between the library management system and curriculum, and questions how the relationship can be taken further.

New service models being driven by new service expectations, where students expect integrated dynamic learning support, in turn drives the need for collaboration. The complex multidimensional learning environment has its challenges, and these will require continuous organisational development to keep evolving into the future. Hester concluded by asking some searching questions which clearly demonstrate the need for continuous planning and development to allow for evolutionary aspects of the model still to come. These questions include:

- What is the digital commons and what is its relationship to the physical commons?
- Does the current model focus mostly on one student cohort?
- Where does non-digital material fit into the commons?
- How is the new e-environment changing information and learning support services?
- What skills and competencies will be required?

How well are Victorian TAFE Libraries equipped to meet the future? Dual Sector perspective.

Clare Carlsson
Information Services Manager
Croydon & Wantirna Campuses
Swinburne University of Technology

Swinburne represents the dual sector (University & TAFE) perspective, and has six campus libraries, of which two are TAFE only. For Swinburne, despite the advanced IT and space developments, which are flexible to allow for constant change at the larger campuses, the smaller campuses lack complex spaces.
Swinburne’s Hawthorn Campus has an Atrium attached to the library, which blends and blurs the inside-outside distinction, and encourages more social and less formal interactions, whilst the smaller campus libraries are in danger of becoming computer laboratories with a few books around the edges. This obvious imbalance demonstrates the very real problem of providing equitable service between the Higher Education and TAFE Campuses within the same institution.

Other challenges include finding the right balance between the information technology culture, which is product and cost driven, and the service culture of libraries, as well as getting the right skills mix with staff, who are trying to deliver an equitable service to often quite disparate student cohorts.

How well are Victorian TAFE Libraries equipped to meet the future?  
Standalone City TAFE perspective

Marion King  
Manager, Information Commons  
Holmesglen Institute of TAFE

Holmesglen, as an early adopter of the information commons model, has been evolving responses to a range of issues, since establishing the model in 2000. Noise/quiet balance, which is one of the ongoing issues which Holmesglen has faced, encouraged King to suggest a range of important considerations when planning the physical space, such as a fluidity and flexibility, which can support a model for engagement and interaction, as well as providing space for quiet reflection. Marion included a viewpoint from Alain De Botton’s architecture of happiness, which suggests we are just beginning to understand how important physical space is to learning (De Botton, 2006). This demonstrates the need to continuously examine and adjust the physical environment to support learning.

As students embrace new technologies, libraries will be challenged to maintain their edge and to exploit the academic potential of student-owned devices as well as finding new ways to utilise emerging forms of learning tools, such as computer games which utilises inductive reasoning and parallel processing strategies. Marion concluded that
trying to provide the best bridge to the right information is the major challenge of an effective learning commons.

How well are Victorian TAFE Libraries equipped to meet the future? Regional TAFE perspective

Kay Weaver
Institute Librarian
East Gippsland Institute of TAFE

Kay Weaver gave a very different account of progress towards the learning commons at East Gippsland TAFE. The institute is “very small and very far away” she said, with three small campuses spread over a large area, yet still catering to 11,000 students. Many of these students are actually studying off-campus, so do not physically come into the campuses on a regular basis. Many are trying to study without computer or internet access, or are trying to study online, in areas where online provision is poor, with dial-up often the only access available. Even one campus does not have access to broadband, so the library has to compete for the limited dial-up connections available.

In library services one success in providing alternative access to the libraries for off-campus students has been gained. A library unit has been created on the WebCT, so every student enrolled at East Gippsland has access to a library unit. A broad range of information and resources are included within this resource called RICH (Resource & Information Centre Headquarters). For those students with no computer access, the same materials are made available in paper format as a combined mail out with vocational and support services.

Given the access issues which this Institute is grappling with, it is not surprising that whilst establishing a Learning Commons is a priority, it is not seen as the most pressing. With the current planning of a new location for the Sale campus in the next few years, the library is providing pressure to create a Learning Commons in the centre of the campus. With all the student services provided from one central area, the students will reap the benefits of easier access to services and a more complete learning experience. Also if all the services are integrated there will be benefits to TAFE in staff time and also a better cross-team staff understanding of how different services are provided.
Search Conference Facilitation

The search conference was facilitated by Dr. Kaya Prpic, a tertiary educator with a particular interest in tertiary and adult education, interpersonal communication, and group dynamics. Over her teaching career, she has become increasingly interested in the learning outcomes of teaching and the role of all parties (the student, the teacher, the institution and the community) in the learning process. Being external to the research project itself, Prpic provided a more objective approach to the planning of the search conference, by asking searching questions of organisers, thus enabling the process to clearly develop.

The aim of the search conference was to provide a forum for a collaborative approach to knowledge sharing and knowledge production in examining the provision of library and information resources within this sector for the future. The day began with a number of warm-up sociometric activities where delegates had the opportunity to connect to each other individually, and to experience the group as a whole. Issues were shared and it was made clear that this conference required delegates to be active participants rather than passive spectators.

Each conference delegate had an opportunity after the speakers, to provide feedback on the morning’s presentations, based on their own individual day-to-day experiences. After reflecting on their particular situation and issues, they were asked to indicate an area of
interest from the five themes previously identified above. They then formed discussion
groups accordingly, after lunch.

It was important for the ongoing success of the project for each conference delegate to articulate issues particular to individual circumstances. Delegates felt free to work to participate in a discussion group which they could both contribute to, and get ideas from. Each of these groups was facilitated by a member of the project team to encourage lively discussion and to help break down the themes into smaller and clearer sub-themes, and to generate a range of potential actions to resolve some of these issues.

Each of the groups brainstormed the main issues within these themes: staff (for staff development); sharing (for collaboration); space (for physical environment); services (for availability and access); and shifts (for keeping up with change).

Each of these groups then outlined the key points within the identified issue and made suggestions as to possible actions to address them. These were then presented to the group as a whole to complete the day, and to form the basis of a series of recommendations which are reported in the next section. Thus the entire group of 67 was ultimately responsible for the content of the resolutions.

Another aim of the search conference was that it served as a platform to find routes into the unknown. Whilst delegates are often enthusiastic during conferences, the facilitation process allowed delegates to feel that they could use the conference to begin the process of creating something new. This was achieved by, firstly, creating a dynamic
that allowed each individual to work on what was important in their circumstance, and secondly, by encouraging the development of support networks.

The following section of the report summarises the outcomes of the Search Conference. This will be followed by a description of the relationships in more detail and then conclude with a list of questions relating to each theme, as well as a checklist for possible actions.

Hands and minds at work.
Section 3 - Summary of Outcomes.

The Search Conference proved very effective at raising shared awareness and encouraging constructive problem-solving. The key points which were outlined by each of the five themes are described in this section, as are the key points within each identified issue.

This section begins with a pictorial depiction of the relationships between the identified themes (see diagram 1 below) and follows with each of the themes described in more detail. The values attributable to each theme are listed under each theme.

Diagram 1: Pictorial depiction of relationships between the themes discussed.

**Shifts**
- How do I keep up with change?
- What are the internal/external forces that impact on change?
- Do I need to be reactive or proactive?

**Sharing**
- With whom can I collaborate?
- What can I collaborate on?
- Who can support me?
- Whom can I support?
- What networks are available?

**Staff**
- Who am I?
- What is my professional identity?
- What roles do I need?
- What skills do I have?
- What skills do I need to develop?

**Space**
- Where do I work?
- How does space impact upon my role(s)?
- How does space impact upon business services?

**Services**
- Whom do I serve?
- What services do I provide?
- What services do I want to provide?
- Who can help me?
Theme 1 – Staff Development (staff)

Sub-themes identified:
1. Encouraging staff to adopt new technologies.
2. Relationships marketing.
3. Skill sets.

Values
Job satisfaction; skills development; identity clarification; providing better services.

Questions and strategies for action

Who are we as professionals and what is our identity?
✓ We need to define our identity as a profession.
✓ We need to establish our identity.
✓ We need to be more assertive in marketing ourselves as professionals and seek opportunities to establish or reinforce communication strategies within the organisation as a marketing tool.

How can we explore our roles & what our ongoing development needs are?
✓ This can be achieved in simple ways, by logging on to library blogs, being involved in professional groups such as the Victorian Association of TAFE Libraries and the Australian Library & Information Association, and actively seeking professional networking opportunities.

How will the roles evolve or change?
✓ Encourage “play” to learn and communicate continuously with all stakeholders to identify changing needs in order to be able to respond to them.
What models of development can we use and how do we ensure the inclusion of all library staff, not just librarians?

✓ Staff training is needed on an ongoing basis and staff need to be encouraged to take responsibility for their own staff development.

✓ Recognise skills that staff have and reward them, whilst also encouraging them to share these skills. (Peer mentoring can be a useful method of sharing particular skills and knowledge).

✓ Professional groups such as the Victorian Association of TAFE Libraries can play a role in supporting staff development, if members are active in their involvement.

How do we recruit and then train new staff within the framework of the chosen model?

✓ We need to attract more flexible staff with more flexible attitudes, who are willing to learn new things and are curious. This may involve looking outside the traditional library roles.

How do we balance the time spent doing tasks with the time needed for professional self development?

✓ It may be cost effective to outsource some of the more time consuming process oriented tasks, thus freeing staff time for professional development.

How do we get staff to adopt a more user-oriented approach, instead of focusing on personal benefit?

✓ Allow time for professional development and establish a good cycle of communication which can build and support a spirit of co-operation both within the organisation as well as from professional bodies.

How do we promote our identities as educators and encourage teaching staff to value the resources and expertise of the library staff?

✓ Encourage staff to pursue partnering with teachers to undertake joint projects, such as creating interactive technology applications.

✓ Sessional teaching staff, present great opportunity to get in and tell them what they can access, and use them to change negative opinions.

✓ Establish formal channels, but do not denigrate informal channels, as both approaches can have their uses.
How do we encourage staff to adopt and promote new technologies?

- Attempt to gain institutional support, from the CEO right down the scale through Directors and Library Managers to ensure access to the technology needed.
- We also need to recognise why we need the technology and be able to communicate the need, so we are not seen to be seeking it just for technology’s sake.
- In order to promote technological solutions to the students, they need to be presented in a format and place understood by them, rather than waiting for them to find the information for themselves.

Theme 2 – Collaboration for mutual benefit (sharing)

Sub-themes identified:

1. Information Technology ‘war’
2. Inspiring collaboration
3. Collaboration between different demographics
4. Benchmarking
5. Rural/City TAFEs collaboration.

Values

Strength in numbers; Supporting those in isolation; Creating community; Getting and sharing new ideas; Sharing resources and Sharing services.
Questions and strategies for action

How do we make collaboration work between different demographic groups?

✓ Identifying the different needs and trying to find common ground for collaboration and sharing.

How does a country TAFE form effective collaborative networks when they are often working in isolation from other TAFEs?

✓ Opportunities for collaboration, need to be sought, between rural and city TAFEs.
✓ There could be a twinning program that allows a sister library approach to share ideas, swap staff and visit each other.
✓ A collaborative approach to professional development, would also offer advantages.

How do we inspire collaboration with departments, such as a teaching department, which is just not interested?

✓ Asking departments what their needs are and targeting resources to meet these needs.

How do we convince the IT Department that library issues matter and action is needed?

✓ As the culture of Library and It Departments are often at odds with each other in relation to priorities, Librarians need to get together to develop and share an IT manifesto, which can be supported by VATL as a group initiative.
✓ Such a manifesto can then support a more uniform approach across TAFEs.

How do we facilitate student collaboration and make the Learning Commons more interactive for the students?

✓ Whilst we are trying to teach and they are trying to learn, this may be happening in different ways, so we need to find new ways of approaching a common understanding with students.
✓ Information literacy is an important part, but it needs to be much more targeted towards the needs of individual groups of students.
✓ Focus groups and other forms of seeking student input need to be encouraged.
TAFE Virtual Campus could also be used in a more interactive way to meet student needs.

How do we make the environment work, when people do not always want the same thing?
✓ We need to create a flexible environment, so that quiet spaces and busy spaces are able to be utilised by the groups who need them without impinging on others.
✓ It is important to involve as many groups as possible in the planning process of the collaborative space.

How do we use collaboration to continue to prepare and plan for the future?
✓ Best practice and benchmarking need to be utilised and VATL has a role to play in supporting a collaborative venture that can be shared by all.
✓ University libraries undertake forms of benchmarking, but TAFE does not have the money to spend on such tools, which can be expensive, so sharing would be imperative.
✓ Many ideas for collaboration could be incorporated into a VATL strategic planning conference, which could help TAFEs to explore and develop directions for the future.

Theme 3 – Physical Environment (space)

Sub-themes identified:
1. Practical management of the space
2. Design and balance
3. Sharing the space.

Values
User centred; Relationship between space and behaviour (research supported); Includes both hard space and virtual space.
Questions and strategies for action

How do we determine the best use of the space?

✓ Space should be user-centred, rather than collection-centred, when moving from a traditional library model into community/work/learning space.
✓ The usage of available space has a direct bearing on creating a manageable and comfortable library environment with minimal noise and access issues.
✓ Whilst shape and size of the space can constrain improvements in noise levels and congestion, strong consultation methods associated with careful planning and review can help clarify outcomes.

Who do we need to consult?

✓ All users of the space need to be invited to be involved in the planning and review of the space.
✓ Careful research into effective facilities provided by others, including tours where possible, will help contribute to the consultation.

How do we create a user-centred space?

✓ Research has shown that there is a relationship between design and behaviour (e.g. colour), so we need to accommodate this into the design and ensure different user groups are comfortable in the same space.
✓ Zoning of spaces and the strategic placement of furniture can create specific spaces that will allow students to use the space more effectively, to support their own learning needs.
✓ Where there are a limited number of personal computers, snap points could be provided for students to plug in their own laptops if they don’t have wireless access. Areas set aside for this may encourage more social interaction.

How do we evaluate the effectiveness of the space and how often?

✓ It is important to manage noise, so there needs to be a balance between zoning and flexibility and needs to be monitored on a regular basis.
Food and drink in the space also need to be considered when looking at effectiveness, as students tend to eat and drink when they study and socialise, but will also need to be monitored over time.

What are the costs and budget constraints which will limit changes to the environment and how can we work with them?

- Lateral thinking to create new areas which can be shared more effectively (e.g., sharing space in the bookshop which may be open longer hours) will be necessary under tight budget constraints.
- Spaces can be multifunctional, depending on the need at the time (e.g., quiet study at times and group discussion at others).

**Theme 4 – Availability and access (services)**

Sub-themes identified:

1. Models of service delivery
2. Student cohorts
3. Governance.

Values

Supports student learning; Accommodates the needs of students; Change in services where needed.

**Questions and strategies for action**

What new ways of learning and interacting could be utilised?

- Further investigate the Learning Commons model to identify relevant strategies for application.
Investigate new models of information literacy delivery, particularly those that engage the 15-17 year cohort.

**How do we give and gain mutual support with teachers?**
- Asking teaching departments what their needs are and targeting resources to meet these.
- Initiating and supporting collaborative projects with teaching departments.

**How does a smaller country TAFE provide more online resources without more dollars to provide them?**
- Seek opportunities for consortia, from within the institute as well as from outside.

**How do we educate TAFE students to use technology responsibly?**
- In planning for this we need to acknowledge the range of educational levels which exist in this environment, which will help identify the different needs and the different resources needed to meet them.
- The social environment for students dictates that delivery needs to be flexible and include the latest technology.

**How important is the virtual environment for TAFE students, depending on course structure?**
- The uptake rate of virtual environments of Certificate II & III students needs to be examined, in order to determine importance, particularly if they are the largest proportion of students using the system.
- The IT framework needs to allow access both on and off campus, in an equitable way for all students.
- IT access also needs to be simple, in relation to download limits, student accounts, ezproxy, and internet access in general.

**How do we enhance the relationship and open the dialogue between the Library and IT Departments to secure the best service for students?**
- Joint governance is needed between the IT and Library role, to ensure a unified approach to service delivery. This can only happen with strong links between both parties.
Decision-making is often controlled by IT Departments in assessing what is possible, desirable and affordable, so the culture which is often disparate between IT Department and Library, needs to be carefully negotiated and supported at all levels within the Institute.

*How do we make the library website more visible on the corporate website?*

- This is an area of marketing which should be part of the negotiation between the IT Department and Library.

**Theme 5 – Keeping up with change (shifts)**

### Sub-themes identified:

1. Leadership
2. Professional development
3. Involving youth
4. Partnerships
5. People / skills

### Value

The only predictable thing is change.

**Questions and strategies for action**

*How do we find out about the new?*

- Library managers need to seek opportunities by forming a lobby group to work proactively with the support of networks such as VATL.
Change needs to be proactive rather than reactive, but also needs to be reviewed regularly to ensure appropriateness and allow for adjustments.

**How do we determine what to adopt?**
- Conduct surveys to find out what stakeholders value.
- Any change needs to identify all the stakeholders, in order to ensure their needs are considered and properly encompassed and libraries need to look beyond the obvious groups of staff and students.

**How does management ensure support for change from library staff?**
- All major changes should involve all staff, so discussions should be frank and open and the leadership style should be participative.
- Management needs to engage with all campuses in a way that acknowledges the constraints of time and staff numbers in smaller campus libraries.
- Cultural change may be needed in order to make the appropriate shifts in the area of recruitment and appropriate skill sets.
- Staff often need space and time to adjust and settle in to new arrangements.
- Shift may include a change of name, so people get used to the idea of ‘new service and ideals’.
- Guest speakers could be useful when introducing new concepts and ideas.

**How do we involve the student body in the process of determining change?**
- Look at the demographics of the student body (e.g., mature and youth) and ensure equal representation of all groups.
- Offer rewards for participation.
- Have a suggestion box to encourage feedback.
- Employ students where possible to encourage ownership and involvement.

**What will be the impact of new courses on staff and service provision (e.g. Diplomas, Degrees)?**
- There is no easy answer, but implications should certainly be taken into consideration when planning for future change.
Where else could we look for support as part of the change process?

✓ Look at strategic partnerships with teachers, as well as retail facilities (e.g. bookshop, café).

✓ Country TAFEs could also look for partnering arrangements in new and different ways, such as with retail outlets in town, such as bakers, supermarkets, internet cafes and information centres.
Conclusion and Recommendations

The collaborative effort at the Search Conference and the energy generated during the discussions was inspiring. The list of outcomes which precedes this conclusion constitutes a summary of the combined effort of all sixty-seven attendees, but should certainly not be seen as a definitive list of all issues. The mere fact that many colleagues were unable to attend this event reinforces some of the issues highlighted by this research. Difficulties due to distance, size of the organisation (including the library team) and funding issues seem to keep arising in discussion and are supported by the statistical analysis undertaken in this research project.

The search conference and this subsequent report are starting points for follow-up and investigation. A test of the significance of this research will be to maintain momentum gained by the events. It is important that issues once identified, are acted upon. The support and encouragement of the whole group is required, by interested members, who are willing and able to become involved.

Recommendations are as follows:

1. Encourage participant libraries to take advantage of research undertaken in this report, and use it to promote the adoption of a Learning Commons Model for Victorian TAFES.

2. Nurture a network of people who have already indicated their interest in the themes of the search conference, to form a VATL focus group.

3. Investigate the possibility of a consortia bid to have the RODSKI survey which is proving effective in higher education institutions, adapted to the needs of TAFE at a price that can be afforded. VATL to develop a business plan for the ongoing support of this survey process.

4. Develop an “IT manifesto” in response to one of the main issues identified at the search conference, around collaboration and cooperation between TAFE Libraries and IT Departments.
5. VATL to hold regular strategic planning meetings to enable the continuous review of the issues and outcomes from this research in order to monitor required changes and adapt policy and further planning for the future.

6. VATL investigates and promotes the use of database consortia, for example, *Electronic Resources Australia* and other consortia opportunities, such as they arise, to its members and in particular TAFE Directors, because they provide support for their libraries to opt in to consortia subscriptions, thus making these subscriptions more affordable, particularly to smaller regional TAFEs.
REFERENCES


Further Reading


APPENDICES
Appendix 1A - Questionnaire

Towards a knowledge commons: 
Modelling a transformation of library services and information resource provision
In the Vocational Education Sector

A number of issues have been identified for library services and information resource provision in the vocational education sector. Serving as a pilot survey, the purpose of this questionnaire is to gather feedback on these issues, and in addition, identify any others that should inform the project. To each of the statements below, tick only one box – 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staffing</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The scope of staff roles in TAFE libraries have changed over the last ten years.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. New positions are needed in the library to accommodate changes in the community.</td>
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<td>3. Library staff need more training to accommodate changes in work practices and new technology.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Library staff require more professional development.</td>
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<td>5. There is a need to recruit staff from diverse backgrounds.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Comments / Other issues:</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes in service provision</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. In my own library/institution, I have observed a shift to greater collaboration with other institutions and libraries.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>8. More collaboration needs to happen with other institutions and libraries to enhance the quality of library services and resources.</td>
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<td>9. There is an increase in community-oriented services.</td>
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<td>10. I have observed changes in existing services of TAFE libraries as a result of institutional collaboration.</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. TAFE libraries are creating new services in response to changes in the environment.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. There is an increase in the availability of electronic resources in TAFE libraries.</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. The budget available for various types of resources (e.g. electronic resources, books, multimedia, etc.) has changed significantly.</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>14. The opening hours of TAFE libraries have increased.</td>
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<td>15. Services in TAFE libraries have changed to becoming more collaborative and open.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. In my own library/institution, we share information resources (including electronic resources) with other libraries/institutions.</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>17. Multiple site licences have been negotiated successfully for this purpose.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. TAFE libraries are effectively tapping into the Web to enhance services (e.g. use of search engines such as Google Web and Google Scholar, alongside search facilities).</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>19. TAFE libraries are effectively using information and communication technologies to enhance services (e.g. online chat with a librarian, alongside reference services).</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. Comments / Other issues:</td>
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</table>

60
Physical Facilities

21. The physical spaces of the library have changed over years to include more communal, interactive, and open spaces.
22. Communal, interactive and open spaces are more effective for the library users and staff of today.
23. There are changes in the types of resources available in the library (e.g., increase in collections of journals, decrease in books, etc.).
24. There is an increase in the number of computers and laptop workstations in the TAFE library.
25. Comments / Other issues:

Availability and Access

26. Generally, there is an increase in the availability of services and facilities in TAFE libraries.
27. Services, resources, and facilities in TAFE libraries are accessible.
28. Access to electronic and physical resources is easily available in TAFE libraries.
29. There is remote access to resources and services in TAFE libraries.
30. Library users have become very mobile (this also refers to their use of mobile devices).
31. Policies governing authentication of users need to be re-examined.
32. Technical support is an essential service of the TAFE library.
33. Technical support is part of the TAFE library I belong to.
34. Comments / Other issues:

Educational and Organisational Changes

35. There are changing perspectives on education and the role of TAFE libraries.
36. New models of learning have strong impacts on TAFE libraries.
37. There need to be new approaches to the provision of services to accommodate the changing nature of students (e.g., part-time and distant student(s)).
38. There need to be new approaches to the use of facilities by non-TAFE students.
39. There need to be new approaches to the provision of services to accommodate the changing nature of staff (e.g., fixed work-time, contracts).
40. Comments / Other issues:

Any other comments:
Appendix 1B – Questionnaire Follow-Up

TOWARDS A KNOWLEDGE COMMONS: Modelling a transformation of library services and information resource provision in the Vocational Education Sector

As part of the research currently being undertaken as a joint project between Monash University and VATL, a questionnaire has already been circulated and completed by many Victorian TAFE Libraries. As a follow-up to the original questionnaire and to attempt to gain clarification of some points which showed either a great disparity in responses, or insufficient clarity, it would be greatly appreciated if you could make the time to complete the following supplementary survey.

The survey is in two parts, with the first allowing a snapshot of the size and location of your particular institute, and the second being more detailed questions which follow on from those of the original questionnaire.

Thank you for your assistance with this research in taking the time to complete this survey.

DEMOGRAPHICS (for statistical purposes)

Type of Institution

☐ Dual Sector
☐ Standalone
☐ Joint Use

Region

☐ Melbourne City
☐ Regional

Staffing levels

Number of full time staff __________
Number of Part time staff __________ FTE __________

QUESTIONNAIRE FOLLOW-UP

1. In which of the following areas does your library currently take a collaborative approach, or intend to for the future?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Future</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Database access</td>
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<td>Inter Library Loans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technical Service Functions &amp; Processes</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Please specify below)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2. Has your library successfully negotiated multiple site licences as a result of collaboration with another institution?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

3. What type/s of community-centred services is your institution involved in?
4. What changes have you observed in your institution as a result of collaboration with other organizations, regardless of the strength of the change?

__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________

5a. Has your library's resource budget increased over recent years to allow purchase of additional resources?

☐ Yes        ☐ No

Any comments

__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________

5b. What proportion of your resources budget do you spend on the following categories?

Books   _____%
Periodicals  _____%
Electronic resources  _____%
Multimedia  _____%

Any comments

__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________

6. Have the opening hours of your library increased over recent years?

☐ Yes        ☐ No

What do you think are the reasons for this?

__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________

7. Have services within your institution become more collaborative between the Library and other areas, such as Teaching and Administration departments?
☐ Yes         ☐ No

Any comments

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

8. What information and communication technologies does your library use effectively to enhance services (e.g. online chat with a librarian, alongside reference services)?

________________________________________________________________________

9a. What are some currently used approaches by your institute for the use of facilities by the non-TAFE community which help generate income for the library?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

9b. What are some which could be undertaken in the future?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Thank you again for your generosity in taking the time to complete this survey.
Appendix 2A – Search Conference Presentation by Bruce Mackenzie

"CURRENT ISSUES AND PRIORITIES FOR TAFE LIBRARIES IN THE FUTURE"

Bruce Mackenzie
Chief Executive
Holmesglen Institute of TAFE
2 April 2007

Current Issues – Priority for TAFE Libraries in the Future

View of the future depends on your context.
- TAFE Institutions very different, especially in Victoria.
- Issues often depend on the context which the Institute operates – e.g. student base.
- Strategic outlook – impacted by planning.
- Federal, State, local.

Federal - What is COAG?

Council of Australian Governments (COAG).
- The peak intergovernmental forum in Australia, comprising:
  - Prime Minister
  - State Premiers
  - Territory Chief Ministers and
  - The President of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA).

What is COAG? (Cont’d)

COAG is supported by two ministerial council relevant to Vocational Education sector:
- Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education (MCVTE), which has specific responsibility for many aspects of vocational education and training.
**COAG Actions**
- COAG Focus is human capital – an increase in workforce participation, improved workforce productivity.
- Immediate measures relevant to TAFE –
  - Outcomes-based quality framework.
  - National consistency licensing in some trade areas.
  - Streamlined RPL/RCC processes for existing workforce and skilled migrants.
  - Comprehensive transition and engagement of young people.
  - Direct and collaborative relationships between providers and industry.
  - A particular emphasis on improved productivity of health sector workers.

**State**
- Much the same as COAG.
- Enrolments –
  - Declining.
  - Only State in continuous decline.
  - School retention rates stagnant.
  - Raises issues about Victoria's capability and fitness of product.

**Number of Students in VET 2000 - 2005**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Victoria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>468.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>471.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>496.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>511.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>480.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>459.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05 %Change</td>
<td>-4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Number of Students in VET in Victoria 2000 - 2005**
- Both State and Federal Governments believe a need for significant increase in Diploma graduates:
  - Service and tertiary industries emerging.
  - Self employment.
  - Difficult – TAFE main provider of Certificate IV and Diploma training.
  - Most TAFE enrolments in Certificate II and III.
Students and Courses 2005 - Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AQF Qualifications</th>
<th>2005 Students ('000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diploma or higher</td>
<td>173.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate IV</td>
<td>179.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate III</td>
<td>437.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate II</td>
<td>248.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Victorian Students

- In decline.
- No employer support (day release).
- Difficult for country Institutions.
- Country Institutions not able to offer wider range of Diploma programs:
  - Class size
  - Expertise
  - Limited off campus TAFE VC capability

School Retention Rates

- Major issue for State and Federal Governments.
- Issue throughout the world - Australian Technical Colleges, Vocational College.
- TAFE seen as a key agent.
- Staffing, services, for these students challenging.

International

- 4th largest x industry in Australia (Coal, Iron Ore and Tourism).
- Victoria a major player - especially Victorian TAFE Institutions.
- These students have different needs:
  - Accommodation
  - Loneliness
  - In transition
  - User of Student Services
**What all this mean for Libraries?**

- Very challenging times because institutions are evolving.
- Hard to find a model TAFE – Institutions varied, students very varied and students very different to a Uni student.
- TAFE students similar to the Canadian system.

**What all this mean for Libraries? (Cont’d)**

- Need to attract students to libraries – not natural readers.
- Need to accommodate self learning, classroom teaching and student social interaction.
- Most TAFE education at Certificate III or below not likely to be big users of libraries.

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**Future of Libraries**

- Library has become a key student centre, needs to be attractive, bright and centrally positioned.
- University library model not the model for TAFE – courses not library focussed.
- TAFE students vary enormously – socio economic/ability/backgrounds immensely varied. University students more homogenous with one learning style.
- The need to attract students to support higher level qualifications raises a number of issues.

**Future of Libraries (Cont’d)**

- Are our libraries sufficiently resourced to meet an increase in student demand? (COAG Paper argues 500,000 more Diploma graduates are needed in 2016.)
- Should TAFE libraries be the same throughout Australia and Victoria?
- Should we be exploring partnerships between TAFE Institutions to facilitate transmission of knowledge to increase higher level enrolments?
Future of Libraries (Cont'd)

Do we need different styles of libraries for different student cohorts?
How do you define a library in a TAFE Institution?
- Core
- Workrooms
- Teaching spaces
- Social learning areas

Future of Libraries (Cont'd)

Where should Libraries be located?
Libraries are significant physical presence on all campuses.
They can or could be a central facility for the provision of a wide range of student services/activities.
Appendix 2B – Search Conference Presentation by Allie Clemans

Learning Commons – A new paradigm for teaching and learning

Dr Allie Clemans

How might the learning commons be brought to life? Allie Clemans considers the challenges presented by the transformation of the library space where teaching and learning have become pivotal in developing information literacy. If teaching and learning are now central, what should such pedagogy look like and what might be blocking its way?

Have you heard the story about the librarian being asked to deliver a guest session to new students on how the library can assist their learning? She was given 15 minutes to tell them all they had to know… but she had to jockey for a position on the agenda. She was put last, after the academics had spoken and more importantly, after the techie from the computer lab had informed students about use of usernames, passwords and email.

Have you heard the one about the librarian who, when asked if the term ‘educator’ fitted the teaching work they did around information literacy, replied – “no, I could never use that term because I am not a formally trained teacher. I am more of a friend to the students…” . She then proceeded to base her 60 minute introductory session on the use of electronic data bases using 60 power point slides.

Before these stories cause you to feel instant hatred for me, let me assure you that they are not drawn on the circumstances of any one in particular… they are fictitious accounts to reflect issues and contexts that I have come to understand through my work with librarians at Monash University over the last months. They are also recounted with love, in recognition of the complexity of the issues and
contexts that give life to such stories. What I will do in this talk is explore these issues. I will draw an analogy between the work of librarians and other educational workers and pose challenges for those within a Learning Commons – particularly around the work of teaching and learning.

In the last months I have become particularly interested in the work of librarians, their roles and approaches they use to teach about information literacy for two reasons. First, it dawned on me, rather late as an academic who teaches and researches in the area of adult education, that education and pedagogy lies firmly at the heart of the mandate of librarians. Second, as I have come to learn more about the work of librarians, I am reminded very much of the work of community education workers on whom my doctoral research was based. I am not sure if everyone here is familiar with the Adult and Community Education (ACE) sector, but it is one that probably is invisible yet located just around the corner from where you live and work. These are neighbourhood houses or community learning centres, attracting small to huge numbers of adult learners, who gravitate to the community education sector for a second chance at learning. These are often ‘disadvantaged’ community members who need a second chance but, in a lot of cases, too, they are people who choose to learn here because they are comfortable in a community space. It is not so much this kind of detail on the sector that is important, but it is more the issues surrounding workers in this sector that may resonate with you. They are educational managers of vibrant (small and sometimes very large small businesses) and/ or educators who teach informal or very formal educational programs – sometimes the very same as those offered in TAFE.

In 1991 this sector was named ‘The Cinderella sector’ in a Commonwealth report on ACE – precisely because the work of those in this sector was devalued, invisible, labour intensive. As the fairytale goes, their beauty was apparent but confined to the kitchen. While I don’t believe this metaphor is immediately transportable to libraries, the Learning Commons or librarians (although someone
once commented to me that librarians were the handmaidens of academics), it tells you something about the way in which people and the space they inhabit are perceived.

What I sought to investigate in my research was the ways in which the community learning space shaped the work practices of those within it. What emerged for me in my research on the nature of work in community learning spaces was that the work carried out there was broad, expansive and included high levels of pedagogical, organisational and management expertise. Yet workers representation of this work was tentative and they lacked a vocabulary to describe it. In their search for an adequate language, they trivialised their work to the extent that it suggested low levels of professional expertise and skill that were at odds with the complex work they were doing. There was a strong reliance on care and relationships that drove workers’ sense of professional commitment. While this distinguished the work undertaken here, it was articulated for its own sake, rather than for the professional intent it carried; i.e., educators talked of close relationships with their students, but did not explain the educational purpose of this.

Overall there are 3 interrelated points I want to highlight about these findings. First, the community space appeared to be one that drew on BOTH private and public characteristics as the foundation of practice. By that I mean, it called on practices/relationships that we might locate as familiar to our HOMES as private spaces (for example, care), as well as practices that we associate with the more professional PRIVATE spaces of work (in the traditional sense) – for example, small business management.

Second, the desirable blending of private and public space was not articulated by these workers. Instead, what seemed to occur was that the PRIVATE connotations of care dominated conversation at the expense of words that depicted the full breadth of professionalism that was evident. This left people
outside of the sector with the idea that what happened within it was not important or valuable. “ACE workers are like ‘mothers and sisters’” someone told me.

Third, work in a community learning space was misunderstood and undervalued by those outside of the sector but here’s the important bit… this lack of understanding was perpetuated by the way it was represented by those within the sector too.

Let me try to make the connections to the Library Commons and teaching and learning within it. These connections relate as much to how the work of librarians is articulated and represented as much as it does to the ways in which teaching and learning could best be shaped. I love the notion of Learning Commons for the kind of space it conjures up in my mind. It is clearly the evolution and design of a potential space that conveys particular messages about, and accommodates particular practices of, a library. It is there to support the idea of a learning-centred service in which technology and information literacy is integrated. It puts learning at its core and calls on co-operation, partnership and a particular pedagogical approach. Potentially!

Beneath the romantic vision of a commons is a hint of things in common. This same romance sits in the notion of the community learning space. But we know that what is in common, shifts daily and that what you and I may have in common today will place us at odds tomorrow. I have seen and felt within my own institution that there are hierarchies of what counts most – technological literacy or information literacy, teaching/academic staff and general (library) staff, 'stand up and deliver' PowerPoint lectures by experts or interactive and dialogic workshops by facilitators, virtual or face to face sessions…. Clearly there is a need for a mix to span the divides and partnerships to bridge the interests. The reality, however, is that they exist. The stories I recounted at the beginning represent realities and struggles –perceptions of the place of information literacy in the minds of academics, students and technicians, perceptions of education
and the role of the librarian as educator. Let’s not allow the name *Learning Commons* to pretend these don’t exist. In such an environment, what is common is contested. But there is much room to move once this is recognised.

If I go back to the ACE sector for a moment, I can see that the communal space was one that sent particular messages and perpetuated certain misrepresentations of work undertaken there. I can see, too, that the professional identities of those who worked there were fragile, reinforcing the lack of significance accorded to this important educational work.

How, then, to place teaching and learning at the core of the Library Commons? This question needs careful and considered articulation. It is much about professional identity as it is about teaching methods/approaches. It begins with confident librarians:

- who name the expanse of their work
- who are not bashful about naming themselves as educators
- who are explicit about the educational dimensions of their work
- whose practice gives life to teaching and learning that manifests the ethos of a Learning Commons.
- who articulate the learning and organisational outcomes/benefits that come from their work
- who name the educational purposes they wish to fulfil

Death by PowerPoint is unproductive for all! It takes too long to make the slides and little is learnt. Instead, teaching and learning must begins with where the learners are at. If they know Google, then that is the place to begin. The mandate though is to make that the start of the educational journey - to invite dialogue, collaboration and encourage critical questioning of texts, sources, information

I have no doubt that many (all) of you who are librarians aspire to, and do, many of these things, in your genuine desire to support and strengthen learners. They
are the same things I aspire to and try to bring to life in my role as educator and your teaching colleagues in TAFE would do too. The challenge of the era of the Learning Commons is to claim and name the educational work of librarians.

Let me bring this to a close on a lighter note:

Have you heard the one about a professor talking with a student about a frog. “How about if we cut off one of its legs?” says the professor. “Would it still jump?” “I don't know” says the student. So the professor cuts off one leg and says to the frog “Jump” and the frog jumps. The professor says “I now conclude a frog with 3 legs can jump.”

The professor then asks the student if he thinks the frog will jump with only 2 legs? They try it and the professor says “Jump”. It jumps and the professor says “I now conclude a frog with 2 legs can jump”. They try it a third time and the professor says “Jump”. It jumps and the professor says “I now conclude a frog with just one leg can jump.” Finally the professor says “how about if we remove all its legs. Do you think it can jump?” “I don't know” says the student. So they remove the last leg and the professor says “Jump”. It doesn't move at all. The professor looks at the student and says “I now conclude that a frog with no legs is deaf!”

Before I go on.. a disclaimer. No animals have been harmed in the preparation of this joke.

How easy to jump to wrong conclusions, based on the evidence. How easy it would be to overlook the place of teaching and learning in the work of librarians, despite all evidence to the contrary. The lessons of the ACE sector tell us that it is as much those outside of the learning space that misread the evidence as it is those within it… who see the evidence but who fail to look at all of it, or who draw the wrong conclusions…in spite of it.
It is not that teaching and learning has never been central to a library. The new paradigm, perhaps, is that teaching and learning must gain more prominence in the work of the library for the benefits they bring and the value they carry.

I am interested to hear about the evidence you see and the conclusions you draw over the course of the day.

Thank you.

Allie Clemans
Faculty of Education, Monash University
Allie.clemans@education.monash.edu.au
Appendix 2C – Search Conference Presentation by Hester Mountifield

Learning Commons
Concepts & Experiences

Hester Mountifield
University Library
The University of Auckland

What is in a name?
- Information Arcade
- Cybrary
- Learning Café
- Digital Library
- Uni-Central
- The Hub
- Information Commons
- Learning Commons
- Knowledge Commons

Definitions
"A space specifically designed to organized workspace and service delivery around the integrated digital environment" (Boagle, 1999)

New name expressing an old concept of community and a shared resource in terms of IT, learning and support

Evolution of Service Models
- Unique needs of community of users
- Reflect culture of institution
- Not necessarily one model of service
- Continuous improvement leading to transformation
**Computer lab**

Technology based – hardware and software

Not necessarily part of the library

Self-service or range of assistance and instruction

Basic to advanced technology

*Example: Social Bank Information Commons, University of Toronto.*

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**Integrated – Library only**

Reference and technical assistance

Variable size and service programme

Seldom other collaborators

Possible technical assistance from others (in front or in back) or provide through own staff

Information literacy instruction

*Example: University of Southern California Leeve Library.*

---

**Library Joint Facility**

Library based with one or more service desks

Likely to see other collaborators to take user beyond digital environment to the learning environment

Collaborators: library, IT and/or others

Learning technologies, academic skills, writing centers, career services, multi media, language centres

*Example: University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, University of Calgary.*

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**Information Commons building**

New model with services for faculty/students

Something completely different and new

Multiple partners – limited only by imagination and leadership

Educational services, student services, media centers, museums, retail

Potential for integration, seamless delivery

*Example: University of Arizona, University of Auckland, new U of Calgary Digital Library.*
The Commons as a student-centred learning environment

Different models & configurations but with similar goals or objectives

Vision / Mission
Goals / Desired Outcomes
- expert support
- collaboration
- IT-enabled
- learning communities
- one-stop shop
- e-literacy
- seamless
- self-service
- comfort
- social learning

What are our institutional priorities
How well do we know our students
What types of physical & virtual spaces will enable learning
How pro-active is our learning support
How interactive is our learning environment
Do we have an infrastructure that enables pervasive learning

Learning Commons drivers
- Technology
- Net Generation
- Collaborative and social learning
- Built pedagogy
Elements of a Learning Commons
Strategic and operational

**Physical**
Location, location, location
Variety of spaces
Flexible furniture arrangement
Future changes in technology
Social & learning hub

**Virtual**
IT infrastructure
Hardware: support & maintenance
Software: productivity & presentation
E-content & Enterprise systems
Authentication & authorisation
Systems security
Desktop: management & future development
Relationship with faculty labs
Strategy re LMS & curriculum

**Learning**
Learning communities: group work, collaboration, peer coaching
Independent or solitary
IT enabled and IT free
IT and information literacy
*Learning Commons*: collaboration with campus-wide learning developments; integration of e-content & e-services with LMS leading to core curriculum revision (Beagle, 2005)
Service

Service expectation & demand for quality
New service models
Integrated dynamic learning support
Continuum of service
Multi-skilled staff
Self-service options
Single or multiple service points

Social

Recreational spaces
Community building
Social learning
Models modern work environments
Retail & food

Management

Co-location or collaboration or integration
Communication
Performance measures
Staffing
Training
Budget
Facilities management
**Collaboration**

**Who?**
- Librarians, IT Professionals, Learning Advisors, Instructional Technologists, Multi-media Producers, Writing Advisors, Language Consultants
- Sometimes also Student Administrators, Counsellors, Health Professionals, International student support

**What about Faculty?**

**Collaboration**

**Why?**
- Complex & multidimensional learning environment
- External & internal pressures
- Combine expertise, resources, facilities
- Symbiotic relationships synergistic outcomes

**Collaboration**

**Challenges**
- Collaboration is complex
- Organisational & administrative lines
- Differences
  - budget structures
  - reward systems
  - performance measures
  - cultures

**Continuous organisational development**

**Outcome?**
- Just another computer lab
- Reference area with rows of computers
- Fiefdom of service points

- Collaborative learning space
- Continuum of services
- One-stop service point
Future....

Does the current model focus mostly on undergraduates?

What is the digital commons and what is its relationship to the physical commons?

Where does non-digital material fit into the commons?

How is the new e-environment changing information and learning support services?

What skills and competencies will be required?
Appendix 2D – Search Conference Presentation by Clare Carlsson

Information Commons at Swinburne

Swinburne Library Background
- 6 campus libraries - two are TAFE only.
- Approx 72 library staff looking after 938 teaching staff, 989 non teaching staff and a student populations of FTE H. Ed 10,503 and TAFE 11,900 (Total EFTSU 46,446)

Swinburne... The Opportunities
- Good infrastructure (quality network, 24 hour late lab, wireless, laptops)
- We are consumer driven and so are providing the service wanted by our customers –LibQual
  - Flexible space use – that allow constant change
  - informs our choice for use of limited space
- In this way we are making the best use of resources for our community.
- Public spaces = the Library.

Swinburne ... the challenges
- Providing equitable service between the Higher Ed. and TAFE Campuses
- Finding the right balance between the IT culture, which is product and cost driven and the service culture of libraries
- Getting the right skills mix with our staff
- Smaller campus libraries (TAFE) lack complex spaces and are in danger of becoming computer labs with a few book around the edges
Swinburne motto:
"Let's get on with it"

I think we are moving in the right direction, we are flexible, responsive and are willing to give it a go.
Appendix 2E – Search Conference Presentation by Marion King

TOWARDS A LEARNING COMMONS

Equipping ourselves for the future

Marion King,
Manager, Information Commons
Holmesglen Institute of TAFE

THE PHYSICAL SPACE

- Non-traditional environment
- Fluid, flexible space
- Promote impromptu gatherings
- Provide individual places for quiet reflection
- Model for engagement and interaction
- What else?

- Sound: Audio outside
- Proximity to other spaces

We are just beginning to understand how important physical space is to learning online.

THE TECHNOLOGY

Computer games are a different type of learning.
They use inductive reasoning and parallel processing (receiving info from multiple sources simultaneously).

Challenges in terms of how these can be utilized in the physical environment

TECHNOLOGIES

- Blogs
- Webinars
- Info databases
- RSS feeds
- Emails
- Podcasts

Users
Students want to interact and contribute

Gen Y's like to work with classmates, multi-tasking, using a range of electronic devices to become involved in creating their own learning:

- creating a website
- Blogging
- SMSing
- Contributing to electronic communities

The challenge is to find better ways to:

- package and deliver electronic information
- specific to client needs

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) LITERACY

Access
Manage
Integrate
Evaluate
Create
WHERE IT ALL COMES TOGETHER

- Welcoming space
- Help
- Resources
- Community
Appendix 2F – Search Conference Presentation by Kay Weaver

How well are Victorian TAFE Libraries equipped to meet the future from the perspective of a small regional TAFE library – East Gippsland Institute of TAFE?

East Gippsland has a slightly different set of issues to the other libraries presented at the conference. Although a learning commons is a priority for us, particularly when the new Sale campus is built, it is not our highest priority or focus.

Currently the Bairnsdale campus has the closest resemblance to a learning commons as most of the service teams are located in the one building. So a student can walk out of the student café and easily move to the library. All student IT support is provided by the library staff and the staff of the two flexible learning centres), the counsellors or the vocational support services. However each of those services operates independently and the main reception and student services is on the other side of the campus! It is a start.

At the moment the Sale campus is located 13 kms from Sale at Fulham. The new location at the Port of Sale within the next few years will improve services and reduce the transport issues for students. As there will be a new purpose-built campus, the library is providing pressure to create a learning commons in the centre of the campus. With all the student services provided from one central area, the students will reap the benefits of easier access to services and a more complete learning experience. Also if all the services are integrated there will be
benefits to TAFE in staff time and also a better cross-team staff understanding of how different services are provided.

Fulham Campus Library

A much bigger priority for East Gippsland Institute of TAFE than a learning commons is access, access for the students to the services that we provide and access for us to the students. We have about 11,000 students; however most of them never attend any of our campuses so our focus needs to be on forms of electronic and other contact and support for those students. A considerable number of those students have either no access to computers or the Internet, or are struggling with a limited dial-up connection. Even one of our main campuses, Forestech, has no access to broadband and students and staff are competing for the few dial-up connections available.

There have been plans in place for quite some number of years to have an optic fibre connection between all of our main campuses, but there have been lots of delays in this process. At the moment we’ve been told that ‘we are as close as we have ever been’! I’m not quite sure what that means and so far it hasn’t been of much consolation to the students who are struggling to use the Internet at Forestech, but maybe it means that there is hope – sometime!

Forestech Campus Library

So everything we produce has to be in several different formats. We have the full version with pictures and diagrams, the text only version for dial-up, the CD-Rom version for those with no internet access, and the paper version for those with no computer.

There are five small Outreach centres in Orbost, Mallacoota, Swift’s Creek, Buchan, Heyfield, and a flexible learning centre in Sale and Bairnsdale. In the past library materials were posted out to external students who were then
responsible for posting them back. We recently have made an agreement with the East Gippsland Shire that the Mobile Library Service will pick up our external loans from the Outreach centres and deliver them to Bairnsdale, which will be a saving for our students.

In Library Services we have had one success in providing alternative access to the libraries for off-campus students. We have created a library unit on their WebCT. So every student enrolled at East Gippsland has been given access to a library unit. There are no assessments involved in the unit of course so we can’t force students to open the unit, but we have included a broad range of information and resources there for their use and many of them are get some value out of it. We have called it RICH (Resource & Information Centre Headquarters

We have included all our tutorials and information literacy documents on the unit in multiple formats for easy access. We have a discussion board open for student contact and lots of quick tips, quote of the week, Internet search tips a list of websites of interest and even a few jokes for the students to access. We plan to update this at least weekly in order to have new material available all the time.

For those students with no computer access we are planning the same materials in paper format as a combined mail-out with vocational and support services. Students received a lot of information at the time of enrolment but many do not read or see the value in that information at that time, so we are providing a follow up service.

How well are Victorian TAFE Libraries equipped to meet the future? East Gippsland Institute of TAFE has made some progress towards being ready, although there is still a long way to go. We have lots of plans for the future, and we are definitely ‘as close as we have ever been’!