



AUSTAFE STUDY TOUR 2005

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This report documents the findings of a study tour of Canadian Colleges between June 12th and June 24th. The first week was organised by AUSTAFE and involved visits to four Canadian Colleges, the Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario and Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. The second week was spent at Southern Alberta Institute of Technology where I shadowed the SAIT Library Manager and visited the University of Calgary Library and Grant MacEwan College Library.

The brief was to investigate four key areas with a view to improving Box Hill Institute processes, and to share the Box Hill Institute experience with colleagues in Ontario and at SAIT. Investigations into Canadian College libraries focussed on the impact of degree programs specifically on the staffing mix and skill level and information literacy models.

Canadian College Libraries

Library Instruction and Information Services

The Library at SAIT has successfully embedded an assessable library instruction unit into the communication component of courses. Librarians at SAIT conduct approximately 100 library instruction sessions a year to 3479 students. Box Hill Institute Library recorded similar figures overall for both orientation and library skills sessions. The difference between Canadian Colleges and Box Hill Institute Library is that the librarians will only conduct basic introductory sessions to the library for those returning to study, ESL and trade course students. Some of the Canadian College Libraries have a policy of conducting information skills sessions in classes only. Embedding information literacy or library instruction within programs is a challenge and Canadian College libraries' success is as limited as ours. In answer to my question about the professional development requirements for library staff working with degree level students it was explained that all Canadian College librarians employed in positions as librarians are educated to a master level and therefore for this group of staff extra training was not required.

Inter Library Loans

SAIT, MacEwan College and the University of Calgary Libraries and possibly others, offered inter library loans free of charge to students. MacEwan College recently extended this service to Faculty staff. SAIT completed 464 requests for inter library loans in their last financial year Box Hill Institute Library completed 133.

Electronic information and services

The Library websites of most of the Colleges were impressive. All had extensive information for library users on their sites. It was interesting to note that all Colleges operated a single library website (unknown for Niagara). Operating one site necessarily requires the development of pages specifically for faculty staff. Humber, Mohawk and Seneca Colleges have prominently labelled Library website pages for Faculty. The University of Calgary and SAIT sites for faculty were not as prominent as others. Some of these pages are excellent not only providing directions on the booking of instructional classes, copyright and plagiarism and library liaison contacts but also information on assessment, lesson plans, conferences and online course tools. Expanded library websites such as those developed by Canadian College libraries serve two purposes. Not only do they provide information for staff and students of the College but importantly for investigators seeking information for comparison and benchmarking.

As Box Hill Institute Library is in the process of reviewing and restructuring the Library website I was very interested in Mohawk College Library's usability testing of

their website. Mohawk College Library has conducted three usability tests on their web site to aid students in finding information needed for research. In response to general feedback and the accomplishment of set tasks from participants, the library made successive changes; access to information was restructured and simplified and help screens added.

SAIT operates a 24/7 virtual reference service in collaboration with twelve other Alberta College libraries. This is an email service with an additional feature of a previously answered question bank. Students are encouraged to check the bank before requesting an answer to their question. Mohawk College utilises a number of tools to assist students to find information electronically, askme@mohawk (email), online chat (real time chat) and instant messaging (quick, basic questions). Humber and Niagara Colleges and the University of Calgary utilise a standard email service. Seneca College utilised both live chat and email.

In comparison to Box Hill Institute Library most libraries have extensive electronic resources. SAIT reported its electronic resource collection as being close to fifty percent of the total library collection.

Mohawk College Library has a strategic intent for the ongoing development of technology initiatives and recently won the 2005 CTCL (Community & Technical College Libraries Innovation Achievement Award for their BRAIN blog on-line Library newsletter.

Budgets

All College Library resource budgets appear large in comparison to Box Hill Institute Library's. The SAIT Library Manager recently initiated the purchase of \$150,000 for e-books. SAIT Library has an annual budget of \$498,600 for library materials. The Humber College Librarian has successfully lobbied for additional funding for degree and blended degree/diploma programs.

Institute	Resource Budget	Student No.
Box Hill Institute	a\$180,115	13,666 FTE
MacEwan College	c\$850,000	10,000 FLE
SAIT	c\$498,600	11,271 FLE
Humber College	c\$661,572	17,000 f/t, 65,000 p/t
Seneca College	unknown	17,000 f/t, 90,000 p/t
Niagara College	unknown	6,000 f/t, 20,000 p/t
Mohawk College	c\$140,000*	10,000 f/t, 46,000 p/t
Uni of Calgary	c\$13million	

* Print resources

Library Layouts, Interiors and Equipment

The SAIT Library is on two levels with most of the bookstock housed on the lower floor. SAIT has a library training room that doubles as both a library instruction room and a computer access lab. The Library has seven group study rooms and seating for 454 students. The University of Calgary Information Commons was an excellent example of where existing spaces had been renovated and remodelled to create a large open area able to accommodate many computers and differing learning spaces. Mohawk College has both a library and a virtual library. The Library houses print library resources, accommodates staff and provides learning spaces for collaborative and quiet study. The virtual library is an open area with floor to ceiling windows, PCs and printers and an Internet café. Seneca College's Newnham and York Campuses are Learning Commons' which provide a number of student services in one location; library services, PCs and dedicated PC support, multiple learning

spaces including collaborative study rooms and other student services both online and drop in, such as tutoring support for programming languages, biology, chemistry, maths and English. As would be expected, this model makes limited use of print resources.

Many of the College libraries have large numbers of computers for student use; Grant MacEwan College, 180, Seneca College, 540 over two campuses, SAIT, 66 and University of Calgary, 230.

Some of the learning spaces for students outside of libraries were very impressive. Seneca College has made some interesting use of corridor or walkway space securing CPUs within walls and installing flat-screened monitors at standing height, large block cushions for seating and low rectangle tables. SAIT also has produced some interesting additional learning spaces for students with the connection of its heritage building to a newer building. In keeping with the heritage feel the light filled space is accommodated with polished wooden tables inset with data points for laptop use and reproduction table lamps.

Box Hill Institute Library is investigating the possibility of operating a one-desk service at each of its campus locations. On its ground floor the SAIT library has split its main desk into two, operating loans and reference services from both. The SAIT Librarian Manager has reasoned that libraries and expansive desks intimidate students. Seneca College Library's York campus has an interesting loans desk model. Library staff's workstations are public, in an open area, fanning out from behind the front loans desk.

I did not see any self checkers or self automated loans machines in any of the Canadian College libraries I visited. There was however one in operation at the University of Calgary library. The reason for the lack of automated self check machines was that the staffing complement in libraries increases at times of peak student use.

Library roles and structures

In Ontario the College libraries outsource the technical functions of cataloguing and acquisitions to an organisation known as Bibliocentre. Bibliocentre also negotiates licencing agreements and databases costs for College libraries.

Ontario College Libraries and SAIT library technicians undertake a variety of roles including duties and tasks that in some libraries are traditionally undertaken by professionally qualified staff. In Canada the qualification level of College Librarians is at a master level. At Mohawk College, librarians were employed under the same conditions as faculty including salary level and annual leave provisions. There are few librarians; Mohawk College Library, 5 of 40 FTE, SAIT Library, 5 of 20 staff, Grant MacEwan (1 Campus) 4 librarians and 7 technicians.

At some libraries technicians undertake reference desk shifts, are involved in collection development, liaise with faculty and conduct basic orientation tours.

Structurally the College libraries were quite different from Box Hill Institute Library. Mohawk College has an E-team (electronics team) who are responsible for investigating new library technology applications and web services and for the implementation of digital information services. The team leader, the cybrarian, also has responsibility to assist faculty in using the library's online resources to enhance teaching and learning. This team is also responsible for the day-to-day operations of the virtual library. SAIT Library staff including library technicians are structured into

areas such as research and knowledge management, AV services and Library systems operation and database management.

SAIT has a programmer located within the library who works with systems staff in developing tools to enhance services and reports.

SAIT, Niagara and Seneca College Libraries did not provide physical services at all of their Institute campuses.

Concluding Remarks

Unlike many of the Victorian TAFE Institutes the College buildings appear to have been purpose built for post secondary education. Overall the College system in Canada appears to be more of an advanced education model than a technical one with its faculty structure and the large full time cohort of students.

The AUSTAFE study tour organiser arranged the first week's visits and contacts with staff. Apart from taking a while to understand their educational system and jargon I was not always able to make contact with those responsible for areas I nominated. Staff were either not available at that time or the College structure split the responsibilities across different faculty.

Some of the ways of work and the initiatives Canadian Colleges have been able to implement could not take place here. This is due in part to the award conditions, industrial relations including casual rates of pay and the ability to utilise monies collected from students in alternative ways. Colleges also have an advantage over us for being that bit closer to the US market. The Libraries especially in Ontario on their establishment outsourced functions and received subsidies from the provincial government for Copyright fees. The Government continues to subsidise copyright fees and provide funds for the centralised cataloguing of resources.