THINKING BIG PICTURE: MEETING THE NEEDS OF RESEARCHERS IN NORTHERN AUSTRALIA

Jayshree Mamtora

Due to the increase in research activity at Charles Darwin University in recent years, the Library created the position of Research Services Coordinator to meet researcher needs. Eighteen months after the new staff member was in place, an online survey was carried out to gauge the success of the new services and resources provided, and thereby identify any gaps. The survey focused on four main areas: research workshops, research consultations, library collections, and overall library support and services. On the whole, the results showed the Library was on track, but that there were areas for improvement. To provide further insight into the feedback provided during the survey, and to build on the initial recommendations, four focus group meetings were convened. The results again confirmed that the Library was providing appropriate levels of support to researchers, but funding constraints to acquire quality resources remained an issue. Focus group recommendations led to further fine-tuning of the products and services offered. The evaluation process was a useful management tool and will be carried out on a regular basis to ensure service quality and impact.

Jayshree Mamtora, Office of Library Services, Charles Darwin University, Darwin, Northern Territory 0909
Email: jayshree.mamtoracd@edu.au

Charles Darwin University (CDU), formerly the Northern Territory University, is by Australian standards a small university. The main campus is based in Darwin in the Top End of the Northern Territory with a number of smaller campuses and centres scattered throughout the 1.4 million km² land mass. CDU is a dual sector institution, serving both the needs
Jayshree Mamtora

of higher education students as well as VET students; in other words, it offers everything from Pharmacy to Commercial Cookery. It is also a regional university with more than half of its 21,236 students engaged in external study mode and spread out over its wider region and beyond, both interstate as well as overseas. Of the total student population, 78% are part-time and 22% are full-time (CDU, 2010).

In 2005, CDU’s aim was noted as being to “increase and focus research activities within the institution to maximise the benefit to both the region and the wider academic community” (CDU, 2005). Whilst small research clusters already existed within the academic schools at CDU, it was the creation of the Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS) in 2004 that placed research firmly on the agenda with, first, the establishment of the School for Social and Policy Research; this was followed later by the School for Environmental Research (SER) and the Graduate School for Health Practice. It was also during this time that the long-established Menzies School of Health Research with its own 20-year history, became a part of the Institute. In establishing the Institute, it was envisaged that the University would become the regional leader in research into the areas of social, cultural, environmental, intellectual, and economic development of northern Australia and surrounding areas, particularly in the so-called ‘near north’ – the islands of eastern Indonesia, and Timor Leste. The research was heavily focused on issues to do with Indigenous Australia and the unique environment and ecology of the wet tropical north and the dry arid centre (CDU, 2005).

At about the same time the Federal Government’s Research Quality Framework (RQF) – an exercise to measure the quality and impact of research being carried out in Australia – was in the process of being set up, and at the end of 2006, funding was made available to universities for the implementation of the RQF. A year later, with the change in government, the RQF evolved into the Excellence for Research in Australia (ERA) initiative, a new method of assessing research quality using metrics and expert review (Carr, 2008).

This series of events was the catalyst for the Library to make research support a priority on its agenda for 2005-2006. Furthermore, the Director of the Library, Ruth Quinn, stated in an interview on 10 March 2011 that in her capacity as a member of the University’s Research Panel, she had observed at close range the changing research landscape at CDU and the University’s research priorities, and thus recognised the need for the Library to respond to this new challenge. A request for new initiatives funding for a research support librarian position was submitted to the University in 2005, but was not successful; the existing team of Liaison Librarians continued to juggle priorities to meet the different needs of the University’s wide range of clients.

At the time, few library positions dedicated solely to working with researchers existed in Australia; but changes were afoot nationally. In 2006, Genoni, Merrick, and Wilson highlighted the need for librarians to become more involved in working with scholarly communities and introduced the concepts of “research literacy” and “e-research literacy” (p. 744). They considered it an opportune time for “librarians to find a new role as fully integrated members of the scholarly
Thinking big picture: Meeting the needs of researchers in northern Australia

communities that underpin research" (p. 743). Earlier, Houghton, Steele, and Henty (2004) had noted changes taking place both in Australia and worldwide in accessing research information and scholarly communication, and touched on the need to provide better access and resources; but they did not provide insight into the new and challenging role that was to be required of librarians in coming years.

Meanwhile a number of internal CDU Library documents from this time reflect the direction that the Library had chosen to take. The Library's 2005 and 2006 operational plans continued to highlight the need for research support and the necessity to provide high quality information services to research staff and students. A 2006 SWOT analysis listed lack of research support as being a weakness. Fortuitously, in the same year, management saw an opportunity to carry out a restructure of staff and seized upon this to create a new research librarian position.

The long-held plan was realised when the incumbent, given the title 'Research Services Coordinator' (RSC), took up the position early in 2007. It was envisaged that in this role the RSC would work closely not only with the existing team of Liaison Librarians but also with the Office of Research and Innovation, as well in providing a range of services specifically to the research community at CDU.

Gradually, the number of services that were provided grew to include a series of workshops tailored for the research community and supported by an innovative suite of tools, as well as a research consultancy service. A large part of the RSC role now is marketing these services to the range of clients both on campus and off campus, both internal and external, regardless of whether they are in the Territory, interstate or indeed overseas. Workshops and consultations have been held at the Casuarina Campus (in Darwin) as well as on the Alice Springs Campus and overseas, in Indonesia. In addition to face-to-face support being provided to researchers and research students and increasingly at the suggestion of research supervisors and research program leaders, e-mail has also proved to be a critical communication medium. As well the Wimba online classroom environment is playing an increasing role in supporting external research students.

METHODOLOGY

As a first step, contact was made with a group of librarians at Deakin University who had reported on a survey on the extent to which library resources at their University was meeting the needs of researchers (Moncrieff, 2007). Members of the group were helpful and provided more details of their project which had been carried out in 2004, and shared a copy of the survey instrument. Their survey was carried out face-to-face by means of a series of interviews with a small group of researchers, and focused primarily on library holdings, both print and online. However, the Deakin interview questions, although of interest, were not used as the CDU focus was planned to be much broader taking in all aspects of library research support. Also, in order to reach as many researchers as possible, both internal and external, on campus and off campus, an online survey questionnaire was agreed to be the preferred option. The objective of the online survey was to
Thinking big picture:
Meeting the needs of researchers in northern Australia

communities that underpin research” (p. 743). Earlier, Houghton, Steele, and Henty (2004) had noted changes taking place both in Australia and worldwide in accessing research information and scholarly communication, and touched on the need to provide better access and resources; but they did not provide insight into the new and challenging role that was to be required of librarians in coming years.

Meanwhile a number of internal CDU Library documents from this time reflect the direction that the Library had chosen to take. The Library’s 2005 and 2006 operational plans continued to highlight the need for research support and the necessity to provide high quality information services to research staff and students. A 2006 SWOT analysis listed lack of research support as being a weakness. Fortuitously, in the same year, management saw an opportunity to carry out a restructure of staff and seized upon this to create a new research librarian position.

The long-held plan was realised when the incumbent, given the title ‘Research Services Coordinator’ (RSC), took up the position early in 2007. It was envisaged that in this role the RSC would work closely not only with the existing team of Liaison Librarians but also with the Office of Research and Innovation, as well in providing a range of services specifically to the research community at CDU.

Gradually, the number of services that were provided grew to include a series of workshops tailored for the research community and supported by an innovative suite of tools, as well as a research consultancy service. A large part of the RSC role now is marketing these services to the range of clients both on campus and off campus, both internal and external, regardless of whether they are in the Territory, interstate or indeed overseas. Workshops and consultations have been held at the Casuarina Campus (in Darwin) as well as on the Alice Springs Campus and overseas, in Indonesia. In addition to face-to-face support being provided to researchers and research students and increasingly at the suggestion of research supervisors and research program leaders, e-mail has also proved to be a critical communication medium. As well the Wimba online classroom environment is playing an increasing role in supporting external research students.

METHODOLOGY

As a first step, contact was made with a group of librarians at Deakin University who had reported on a survey on the extent to which library resources at their University was meeting the needs of researchers (Moncrieff, 2007). Members of the group were helpful and provided more details of their project which had been carried out in 2004, and shared a copy of the survey instrument. Their survey was carried out face-to-face by means of a series of interviews with a small group of researchers, and focused primarily on library holdings, both print and online. However, the Deakin interview questions, although of interest, were not used as the CDU focus was planned to be much broader taking in all aspects of library research support. Also, in order to reach as many researchers as possible, both internal and external, on campus and off campus, an online survey questionnaire was agreed to be the preferred option. The objective of the online survey was to
measure the effectiveness of the services being offered, and the impact to date. The survey was carried out over a four-week period in late 2008.

It was followed by a series of focus group discussions on campus, which enabled the Library to present and discuss the survey findings with researchers. It was intended also that the focus group format would provide an opportunity for small groups of researchers to volunteer feedback beyond specific questions relating to the Library's research services. The four focus groups met between December 2009 and February 2010.

Results and recommendations from each activity are presented in the next two sections.

**ONLINE SURVEY**

The online survey was designed using SurveyMonkey, the online questionnaire tool, and after a pilot, proceeded with some minor changes. The survey was carried out over a four-week period between October and November 2008 and targeted the research community. The survey questionnaire comprised 13 questions and covered the following major areas of library services being provided: staff support, research workshops, research consultations, resources, infrastructure (PCs, study environment, etc.), interlibrary loan service, and off-campus library support.

There were 116 responses to the online survey, which at the time amounted to a 39% response rate. Of these, 93 (80.2%) respondents were based either at the CDU Casuarina Campus or the Menzies School of Health Research in Darwin; four respondents were based in Alice Springs.

The results of the survey are presented under four main headings: Research Workshops, Research Consultations, Library Collections, and overall Library Support & Services.

**Research workshops**

A critical component of the Library's research services is the range of training workshops offered. Of the 112 who responded to the question on the research workshops being offered, 75 (67.0%) considered the workshops as being good to excellent. Only 10 (8.9%) considered them fair to poor. As some comments indicated, the 27 respondents who ticked the “don't know” or “not available” box may have been unable to attend a workshop as they were based off campus.

*Because I live in a remote community I am unable to access research workshops. The Library staff have been very helpful in giving me individual support when I can get to Darwin.*

**Workshop attendance.** A number of workshops were offered specifically to researchers at CDU in the 18 months prior to the survey; and at least two-thirds of all respondents had attended at least one workshop. The most popular of the workshops targeting researchers was the Advanced Information Skills Workshop, with 41 (35.3%) respondents indicating they had attended. Subject-specific
workshops, such as using health, education or archives databases, had also been well attended.

EndNote workshops have been run by CDU Library staff for the wider University community (not just researchers) on a regular basis for many years, and 70 (60.3%) respondents noted that they had attended these since they were first offered in 2003. Given that 95 (81.9%) respondents were managing their information by using EndNote, high workshop attendance levels are not surprising.

Table 1: Workshop attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>%age of total possible attendees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Information Skills Workshop (10 offered)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Health Databases Workshop (2 offered)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting Up Alerts Workshop (1 offered)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Education Databases Workshop (1 offered)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding Theses Workshop (2 offered)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Archives Databases Workshop (1 offered)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracking Research Workshop (7 offered)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using National Citation Reports Workshop (3 offered)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EndNote Training Workshop</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>60.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Usefulness of workshops. Of the 76 responses to this question, 64 (84.2%) found one or more of the workshops useful, and six (7.9%) did not find the workshops useful. At this stage, it is not known whether those six were already familiar with the content, or that the workshop didn’t meet their needs.

Online research tutorials. Of the 116 researchers who responded to the question on whether they used CDU online research tutorials—Library podcasts, video tutorials, Researching Skills website, MyResearch web site—93 (80.2%) said that they had not used any of them. This is a significant lack of use. It is possible that the research students and staff do not like using online research tutorials or that they did not know about them. Of those that had used them: 16 (13.8%) had used the MyResearch web page; 12 (10.3%) had used the Researching Skills page; four (3.4%) had used the video tutorials; three (2.6%) had used the podcasts. Of the 19 respondents to the question on whether they found the above online tutorials useful, six (31.6%) found them useful, four (21.1%) didn’t, and the remaining nine (47.4%) either didn’t know about the tutorials or hadn’t used them.
Research consultations

Of the 107 respondents, 42 (39.3%) considered the research consultation service being provided as good to excellent. A slim majority, 57 (53.2%) ticked the “don’t know” or “not available” box. It is not known whether this was because the need for research consultations was just not there, or whether it was due to lack of awareness that such a facility was offered, as this comment indicated:

The support was very good – I probably could have utilised research consultations more in hindsight.

Library Collections

Electronic journals. Considering the numbers of remote researchers, access to electronic journals can overcome the tyranny of distance. Of the 111 respondents to this question, 77 (69.4%) rated the collection of electronic journals as being good to excellent. Nevertheless, comments to this question suggested that they considered the collection was limited in some discipline areas:

As a remote researcher, the electronic journal and book access is invaluable for my research

The number of scientific journals in the library is limited

I am forced to use electronic journal access from membership of an interstate university due to the fact that clinical medical journals are so poorly available on-line from CDU.

Hardcopy journals. Of the 107 responses, 49 (45.8%) considered the Library’s hardcopy journal collection as being good to excellent. However, an almost similar number, 42 (39.2%) considered it fair to poor. This suggests that most likely there is room for improvement.

Electronic books. Of the 110 respondents, 32 (29.1%) considered the Library’s collection of electronic books as being good to excellent; but nearly half (53, or 48.2%) ticked the “don’t know” or “not available” box. This suggests there is scope for improvement in either their availability or promotion.

Hardcopy books. Of the 109 respondents, 52 (47.7%) considered the hard copy book collection as being good to excellent; but 42 (38.5%) considered the hardcopy book collection as being fair to poor. Again, this suggests that some improvement may be necessary, although at the level that researchers and research students operate, they are less likely to find in the Library the specialist texts that an undergraduate would expect to find:
Table 2: Number of responses by category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consultations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collections</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support and Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The bar chart represents the number of responses for each category, with categories including Consultations, Collections, Support and Services, and Workshops, and response categories ranging from Excellent to Poor.
Library Support & Services

Staff support. Of the 115 respondents to the question on the level of staff support, 52 (45.2%) considered the support excellent, and a further 51 (44.3%) considered it good or very good, which is a very positive result. Some of the individual comments suggest that the respondents are surprised by the level of staff support:

*The library staff and services are possibly the best I have encountered in Australia. This was a great – but pleasant – surprise!*

*Having attended the university some years ago I didn't expect the staff to be as good or as helpful and knowledgeable as they are.*

Infrastructure. This question considered the infrastructure of the Library, that is, the availability of PCs, study environment, and so on. The whole ground floor of the main Casuarina Campus Library is designated the Learning Precinct, with a large number of networked computers that are fully wireless-enabled. Of the 108 researchers who responded, the majority, 58 (53.7%) considered the Library's infrastructure as being good to excellent. However, 42 (39.8%) ticked the “don’t know” or “not available” box. This may be because they have their own office and do not need to use physical Library facilities.

*It would be excellent if the library had a dedicated silent study area for computer users. The learning precinct is good but can get very noisy.*

*The library can be quite noisy at times even in quiet study areas.*

Interlibrary loan service. Of the 111 researchers that responded to this question, 78 (70.3%) considered the interlibrary loan service as being good to excellent. Many of the researchers are off campus, and appreciate the ILL facility as these comments show:

*The interlibrary loan interface for obtaining journal articles (either through the portal or the interlibrary loan service) is excellent. It's clear, straightforward and with nothing fancy, which means it works efficiently. Please don't change it!*

*I have appreciated the service of Off Campus enormously, especially [name]. No problem is too hard for them, and everything I ask for, even quite esoteric sources, is provided in a timely way.*

Off Campus Library support. Of the 107 respondents, 41 (38.3%) considered off campus library support as being good to excellent. However, a higher number, 61 (57%) ticked the “don’t know” or “not available” box. The primary reason for this may be due to the fact that few respondents were entitled to this service, which is only available to those clients that reside 80 km or more from a CDU campus.

*I could not do my research if it was not for the dedicated and outstandingly professional staff and service that I have received from the library – in
particular the off campus library support. I am so very grateful to have them and that the university is able to provide such services to students.

The library is a great resource though being off-campus, I use it very rarely. Accessing electronic journals through the library’s database can sometimes be difficult. What support I have had has been very good.

Areas for improvement

Researchers were asked to identify one area of research support in the Library that could be improved. A total of 70 researchers responded to this question. The main responses (with the number and percentages in brackets) are presented in Table 3 according to broad subject categories. They closely match the findings in other parts of the survey.

Table 3: Areas for improvement

Survey recommendations

Overall, the survey results indicated that the Library is on track, with an acceptable satisfaction rate. Nearly 90 per cent were happy with staff support; 67 per cent found the research workshops good to excellent; of those that have undertaken a research consultation, 84 per cent found them good to excellent; and both the interlibrary loan service (70.3%) and off-campus Library support (38.3%) is considered good to excellent. In terms of usefulness, 84.2 per cent of those replying found one or more of the workshops useful.

Areas for improvement, noted both in comments made and the survey responses, showed that the gaps identified in the survey were in the area of the library collection, online journals in the science and medical area in particular. In the financial climate at the time, and the prevailing exchange rate, it was not
possible to acquire any further online databases. Since then Library staff have worked with researchers to profile the collection, and streamline it based on usage statistics. Currently close to 75 per cent of the limited budget is spent on online materials, leaving few funds to purchase hardcopy materials.

Based on the survey results and taking into consideration the comments made, there were a number of recommendations, the main ones of which were:

- Evaluate the current range, and runs of online journals being acquired, in partnership with the researcher community.
- Continue to review the hard copy book and journal collection to ensure both the needs of the wider University community as well as the reasonable needs of research staff and students are being met.
- Continue to promote Library services, especially the online tutorials, to the research community.
- Provide more support for researchers based off campus.
- Provide more support for research staff in Alice Springs both at the Campus and at Menzies.
- Make CrossSearcher, the metasearching tool, more flexible and more user friendly.
- Offer additional workshops targeting small specialised groups.
- Make the Library web page more user friendly.

FOCUS GROUPS

It was intended that the October 2008 online survey would be quickly followed by a series of focus group discussions. In the event, the first of the four focus groups was not formed until December 2009. The main reason for this was that many researchers were out in the field during semester and therefore unavailable until the end of the year; another contributing factor was the effect of the Global Financial Crisis on the Library budget — it was most unlikely that the Library would be in a position to meet the needs of researchers, particularly as lack of resources was considered a significant issue.

The focus groups were convened with the aim of gaining further insight into the feedback provided in the survey and building on the recommendations outlined above. They allowed small groups of researchers the opportunity to meet Library staff and ask questions of them, as well as respond to a list of set questions relating to Library services. The ten questions were intended to elaborate on the main issues raised in the survey, with an additional question on the information-seeking behaviour of researchers.

Based on the highest number of respondents to the survey, the following schools were selected for focus group discussions: Menzies School of Health Research (MSHR); School for Environmental Research (SER); School of Environmental and Life Sciences (SELS); and School for Social and Policy Research (SSPR)
(now renamed The Northern Institute). Although SELS was a non-IAS school, it comprises a large research cohort. Each of the four focus groups were given the opportunity to provide feedback on services offered by the Library. The number of participants by School was: MSHR – 9; SER – 8; SSPR – 8; and SELS – 4.

Services in general. Members of all four focus groups were familiar with the Library’s services. The responses ranged from ‘All fine’ and ‘All familiar with the Library’s services’ to specific, individual comments:

*The system is fantastic – I have been a student at CDU for 6 years and have seen a dramatic change in the Library services available.*

*Where possible can you provide online resources as much as possible.*

Information-seeking behaviour. Members of three groups provided an insight into their information-seeking behaviour. On being asked how participants went about locating relevant resources, the majority appeared to have established a pattern depending on their needs. Some started the search process with either Google or Google Scholar; others with Library catalogues, the Australian Libraries Gateway or the CrossSearcher metasearching tool followed by individual databases or interlibrary loan requests.

*I usually start with CrossSearcher which is a great tool.*

Resources. All four focus groups provided feedback on resources, clearly an area of major concern. The majority of researchers appeared not to have a great need for hardcopy materials although Menzies researchers agreed that provision of a small allocation for library resources would be useful. Moreover, they expressed a need for better online resources in medicine and the health sciences. There was a suggestion that researchers when submitting grant applications include a line item for library resources, but it has since been established that purchasing materials is considered the responsibility of the Library and would not be approved by research funding bodies. Researchers from SELS and SER also agreed that they did not have much need for print resources although one researcher said she still liked using hardcopy materials as it allowed ‘browsing and serendipity’. Researchers from SSPR indicated their needs were different to those of researchers in the sciences; they considered it important that the Library hold classics in social theory for example, titles that may not have a high usage but nevertheless needed to be available for consultation.

*Need more infrastructure [resources] to support the growth in research.*

*Lack of medical resources - social science resources are better.*

SER and SELS researchers agreed that while the scope of research has increased dramatically at CDU in recent years, the extent of resources has not kept up to support it. Specifically, the growth in research activity has not been matched by an increase in the Library’s resources allocation. Furthermore the Vice Chancellor is developing partnerships with a number of universities in Indonesia. Thus far the Library has been very supportive of visiting scholars from Indonesia but long-
term resourcing could become an issue. As CDU continues to grow its research capability, and performed well in the recent ERA 2010 exercise (CDU, 2011a), this is an issue that needs to be addressed urgently.

Access to resources. There was mixed response toward the CrossSearcher metasearching tool available for searching the Library’s databases. It was evident that all researchers were familiar with the tool and had used it at some point or were continuing to use it. While one researcher in SELS considered it a great tool to start searching for resources in databases, others in SER and at Menzies found it cumbersome to use.

I have difficulties with CrossSearcher - keep getting lost.

Interlibrary loans. All research groups indicated that their staff were familiar with the interlibrary loan process and that it was a very good service. It was particularly useful in helping fill the gap when particular resources were not available through the Library.

Very useful when looking for a particular article not available through CDU.

It’s a very good service.

Workshops. All four focus groups provided feedback on the range and content of workshops available. Members of each group stated that the current range of workshops was good, and that they provided an opportunity for a researcher to acquire skills quickly, and in a short space of time. Suggestions for additional workshops by researchers from SELS, SER and SSPR included: EndNote Web and exporting from Microsoft Excel to EndNote; multidisciplinary research resources for scientists; presentation skills and writing skills.

Current range of workshops are all very good and useful - it’s easier to go to one to learn how to do something than try and work it out for yourself.

It would be useful to have a workshop on EndNote Web.

Online support. In relation to the usage of online resources, no researcher appeared to be familiar with the Library’s series of podcasts or video tutorials. Those who were familiar with the MyResearch web page found it really useful, as it was informative and contributed to the independence of researchers.

MyResearch web page is very useful - helps make researchers more independent.

I'm not familiar with podcasts.

Focus Group recommendations

Overall, members of the focus groups agreed that the Library was serving the needs of the research community well. In particular they were satisfied with the range of workshops that were being offered feeling they served the specific needs of the research community. Researchers also stated that the Library’s Interlibrary
Loan service worked well, and proved particularly useful in filling gaps in the journal collection.

The major issue raised again was the lack of funds available in acquiring quality resources to support research. It is of particular concern that the Library’s acquisition budget is not indexed to the rising costs of resources, and there are no mechanisms in place to ensure that new teaching and research resource needs are met. Not only is the Library below the median expenditure on non-scholarly resources, but it is also, according to figures compiled by CAUL in 2008, at the bottom of the list of Innovative Research Universities Australia (IRUA). The Library budget has not changed with inflation or the changing nature of university business for over 10 years. Spending on books has dropped to the lowest of any Australian university library. The Library’s nearest competitor spends approximately twice the amount spent at CDU (CDULIA, 2010).

Actions Taken

Both the assessment exercises carried out to gauge the success of the support being provided to researchers concluded that, overall the Library was successful in meeting the needs of this group.

Many of the recommendations from the survey and the focus groups have now been addressed. More targeted workshops are being offered for special groups including those based in Alice Springs, and a series of online workshops have been developed for external and off-campus researchers. The Library web pages have been revitalised and positive feedback has been received on their usability. CrossSearcher is no longer being supported and has now been replaced by Summon, the web discovery tool. Increased capability of the Liaison Librarian team has meant that the RSC is freed up to do more high-level training, for example with the level of support being provided with EndNote. Links with the Office of Research and Innovation have been further strengthened, with a more coordinated approach to providing support being developed.

The area earmarked as being of major concern by both exercises was that of the lack of quality resources available to support research. This remains an issue but CDU Library continues to pursue a series of avenues to help bring it to the fore. The Library has joined ARLAC (The Academic and Research Libraries Acquisitions Consortium) to enable better value for money for its expenditure on books. With support from the University’s finance office, a bid to increase the resources budget for 2012 is currently being prepared. Library staff continue to raise the visibility of this issue with the CDU scholarly community to gain their support. More recently, the new Vice Chancellor of the University has taken on board the concerns of the Library and moves are afoot to redress the funding imbalance. As CDU continues to grow, and with the restructure of its research schools completed in 2010 (2011c), it is an issue that is receiving attention. The message appears to be filtering through and it is hoped that the coming year will bring positive outcomes.
CONCLUSION

Despite continuing challenges and budgetary constraints faced by the Library, it is evident that the University is doing well in terms of research quality and output. The results of the recent ERA 2010 exercise saw the University’s research strengths in the areas of Environmental Science and Management, Zoology, Agricultural and Veterinary Sciences, Clinical Sciences, and Medical Microbiology, all receive performance rankings above both the Australian as well as world average (CDU, 2011a). From 2005 to 2010 CDU’s external research income doubled to $32.8 million and more recently, the 2010 SCImago Institutions World Report ranked CDU at the top among Australian universities in terms of research performance (CDU, 2011b). Furthermore, an international survey ranked CDU fourth in Australia and 123rd worldwide for environmental and ecology research based on research quality (Top institutions in Australia and New Zealand for research in environmental sciences and ecology, 26 May 2011).

It is conceivable that the efforts of the Library in providing support to the research community has contributed towards the impact and quality of the research being carried out at CDU. The extent to which this is the case will be measured in the next survey. The evaluation exercise has proved useful and has presented opportunities to improve the products and services offered by the Library. It is intended that the research community will be surveyed on a regular basis in order to respond to new or changing needs, ameliorate any problems and identify new opportunities. Scholarly communication trends will continue to change, and academic and research priorities shift as a result. Regular communication with researchers and continuous assessment of their needs will help the Library keep track of changes happening in the research landscape both nationally and globally, and play a critical role in the success of their endeavours.

REFERENCES


Thinking big picture:
Meeting the needs of researchers in northern Australia


