



# Te Whakaterere

the newsletter of the Matariki Network of Universities Library benchmarking project  
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## What's in a name?

the network of Universities adopt a Māori name

The seven founding partners in an international network of universities decided to adopt a Māori name for the consortium. The group is called the Matariki Network of Universities (MNU). 'Matariki' is the Māori name for the group of stars called the Pleiades, which are also known as the Seven Sisters. Of course 'Matariki' is also the word for the Maori New Year, symbolising a new beginning.

The partners in the network are Dartmouth College (established 1769) in the USA; Durham University (1832) in England; Queen's University (1841) in Canada; University of Otago (1869) in New Zealand; University of Tübingen (1477) in Germany; University of Western Australia (1911) in Australia; and Uppsala University (1477)

in Sweden.

These universities are amongst the oldest and foremost places of learning in their respective countries. They are scholarly communities where excellence in research and education take equal priority. The scale of the historic university cities or towns in which most are embedded enables staff and students to live and work together in a community with mutual respect for learning and each other.

All of the universities in the MNU are research-intensive and campus-based, with a focus on providing a high-quality student experience. They are also comprehensive in their scope of disciplines and outward looking.

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## First Issue



This is the first issue of a regular newsletter that will inform the Matariki network of universities and their communities on the libraries benchmarking project.

It will feature information about the project and its progress. It will also include related activities across the partnership and highlight relevant material on quality issues.

Like the name of the network, Matariki, the name of this newsletter, te Whakaterere, is a Māori word meaning navigation. It reflects the purpose of the benchmarking project. As the network partners collaborate and compare library performance they will be navigating their own courses finding the best way forward.

The leaders from the seven universities meet regularly to discuss a wide range of potential programmes of activity. These have included enhanced student exchange, development of joint postgraduate programmes,

social responsibility projects, research collaboration, visiting fellowships, staff exchange and secondments, benchmarking and sharing of best practice, and cultural and sporting activities.

For more information refer to the web site:  
[www.matarikinetwork.com](http://www.matarikinetwork.com)

## Network Libraries collaborate on benchmarking

### The first international exercise of its kind

In early 2011 Howard Amos, University Librarian from Otago University, attained agreement from his counterparts across the MNU libraries to participate in a benchmarking project. This project will be the first

three identifiable areas of support for the institutions: support for research, support for learning and teaching, and the role of the library as a place within the student experience. The objective of the project is to provide a

In recognizing that earlier benchmarking exercises had focused on operationally centric topics, this board question was selected to position the libraries within the aims of the wider university i.e. the library contribution towards student retention and progression. It also acknowledges the increasing importance of libraries demonstrating to their governing bodies and stakeholders their impact and ultimately the return on investment.

*If we enable and support the academic endeavor how do we measure our effectiveness?*

benchmarking exercise of its kind across a group of international University Libraries.

The project will see the development of a series of common performance measures which will provide the universities with a benchmark for reviewing and comparing library performance in areas of specific interest. Benchmarking activities lie in

shared response to the question: "If we enable and support the academic endeavor how do we measure our effectiveness?"

The first area of focus is support for learning and teaching. The partners are currently considering the range for the initial project study, specifically, activities and practice for programs that support the transition of first year students to university life.

The emphasis of the project is on sharing and learning from practice. Outcomes from the project will help establish a range of useful resources for MNU libraries; enabling the establishment of links with each other and facilitate the sharing of examples of practice.

In addition, a broader aim will be to develop skills, services and infrastructure that can be used by other

units of the Matariki universities to facilitate further benchmarking activities.

## *Developing a common language* work begins on an information gathering framework

The first discussion document has been distributed to each of the members across the network for them to consider and provide feedback to the project manager, Simon Hart, by the end of October. The document includes a number of recommendations on the development of the project, in particular the project aim, scope, and a timetable to best suit the varied schedules and priorities of all partners.

More specifically the document starts to consider a framework for information gathering that is structured to allow a standardised approach to collating activities and a common understanding of what will be benchmarked. Each of the partners has been asked to contribute to determining the context by defining elements of their activities, institutional policies, cohorts and other facets that will influence how

and what they each respond to in the on- going surveys instruments.

In discussing the project Simon has said that he “recognizes that one element that will be crucial to the success of this project is the development of a common language so that libraries can compare like with like.”

Once the feedback has been collated and considered the first of the survey questions will be developed. It is anticipated that the survey will be sent to members to complete in the first quarter of 2012.

The process of consultation and participation is extended beyond what would be normally expected to accommodate the variations in the academic calendar of all partners.

## Key contacts across the project



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Dr. Mary Davies  
[University of Western  
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Perth, Australia.

Ms. Pia Bodå  
[Uppsala University](#)  
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## Academics appointed to consult on the survey

### A perfect match

Professors Jeff and Lisa Smith, from the College of Education at the University of Otago, have been appointed as consultants to the libraries benchmarking project.

Before joining the University of Otago in 2005, the Smiths combined their American university careers with running the office of research and evaluation at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Over two decades they advised more

than 30 of America's top museums how to improve visitors' educational experiences.

Having now made Otago their new home, Jeff is co-director of the Educational Assessment Research Unit and Lisa is Associate Dean, Research. With the Smiths on board there will be robust academic vigor brought to the project, allowing the library partners to focus on benchmarking.

In confirming their appointment, project director, Howard Amos stated "this is the perfect match; the Smiths bring a wealth of experience to the project and they are ideally placed right on the door step of the project management team."

Details of Jeff and Lisa's recent research output are available at the following link <http://www.otago.ac.nz/education/research/index.html#publications>

*"Benchmarking is concerned with developing systematic and structured approaches to finding and implementing best practice. It links the identification of what is currently the best way of doing things in the sector with a determination to improve one's own organisation and to be the best."*

(Peter Brophy, 2006)

This newsletter was compiled by the Matariki Network of Universities Library Benchmarking project team.  
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