

## *Tangible practical benefits*

### Benchmarking experiences shared

Staff from Durham and Otago reported on their experience of the benchmarking project at a Quality Forum presentation held at the University of Otago on 16<sup>th</sup> October.

Speakers included Howard Amos (University Librarian, University of Otago), Simon Hart (Project manager, University of Otago), and Jon Purcell, (University Librarian, Durham University).

In outlining the background to the project, Howard described it as an organic iterative process through which data can be shared that allows each partner to learn more about one another's activities and resources.

In sharing Durham's experience Jon stated that the project has provided tangible practical benefits from the network partnership. He identified that following the first survey round his next

challenge is how to engage other parts of the Library to benefit from the project as well as from other strands in the wider network.

When discussing Otago's approach Simon provided some insight into how he involved the Otago liaison team with the project. To extend engagement one group of liaison staff was asked to answer the survey questions and another group was asked to analyze and report on the survey results. Consequently, aspects of the later groups findings have been incorporated into operational planning.

The 45 minute video presentation is archived at the Matariki collaborative workspace and can be accessed via this [link](#)

## *Meeting on the agenda*

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Planning is underway for a face to face benchmarking project meeting in 2013 to be hosted by Dartmouth College. At this stage it is intended that the meeting will take place in the second half of 2013.

The need for this meeting was identified through the first survey round. It will enable issues raised from considering the survey findings to be addressed and arrangements for the next stage of the project to be advanced.

Opportunities for further collaboration between the partners will also be explored.

Details of the meeting schedule will be distributed in the New Year.

## Partners meet at conference

The Library Assessment conference held in Charlottesville, Virginia, U.S.A. during October provided an opportunity for staff from some of the Matariki Network of Libraries to meet informally.

This was the fourth biennial conference to be held. These aim to build and further library assessment community by bringing together interested practitioners and researchers who have a responsibility or interest in the broad field of assessment. Details of this and earlier conferences are available at the website <http://libraryassessment.org/>

Attendees from within the Network included: John Cocklin (Dartmouth College); Simon Hart (University of Otago); Maureen Miller (University of Otago); Laurie Scott (Queen's University).

In reporting back on the conference Maureen said that when talking with Laurie she was astonished at what they both had in common. This did not just extend to work issues, it turned out that both of their families were involved with the rearing of successful race horses.

John also met up with Maureen and Simon and shared the development of the first Dartmouth College

## Dartmouth develop an assessment tool

Opportunities to share this are being discussed

The Library surveys the Dartmouth community regularly to learn how services and resources are used, the extent to which these are helpful for research and work, and who uses them. The first Dartmouth College Library Triennial Survey was conducted in February 2011. It

replaced the LibQUAL+ standardized instrument which was used in 2004 and 2008. Dissatisfaction among respondents and low response and completion rates for LibQUAL+ led the Library Assessment Committee to create this new tool which borrows from both in-house

and nationally known surveys. The Merged Information Services Organizations (MISO) Survey was particularly influential. The response and completion rates for the Triennial Survey were much higher than those for previous assessments. It is the Committee's intention to use

## Contacts update



The University of Western Australia Library contact is now Dawn McLoughlin. [dawn.mcloughlin@uwa.edu.au](mailto:dawn.mcloughlin@uwa.edu.au) Dawn has taken up this responsibility as part of her role as Associate Director (Resources & Development). The project team acknowledges the valuable contribution provided by the previous contact, Catherine Clarke, during the first stages of the project.

Triennial Survey. In this issue John provides more details on this assessment tool.

this instrument into the future, with minor modifications appropriate to changes in technology, the academic environment, and Library assessment priorities.

The Triennial Survey supplements the Library's ongoing assessment efforts which use tools and techniques ranging from usage statistics to focus groups. The information gathered through assessment has helped guide Library decisions for one time projects, such as renovations to Library space, as well as for ongoing services and resources, such as the Library web site and online collections.

An important new feature in the Triennial Survey are sets of paired questions that ask respondents how *important* specific services and resources are to their work and how well these same services and resources *meet their needs*. This

deliberate move away from a more traditional satisfaction ranking is meant to answer an important question: *how well does the Library provide services and resources that our users identify as valuable to them?* This makes users' priorities the standard for assessment.

Results of the survey are generally consistent with data gathered in the past and through more informal channels. The paired sets did differentiate those things that may meet needs but are not considered important by the user community, an important distinction often lost in other types of surveys. The Dartmouth community has a high regard for Library staff and their efforts. Users believe that they are treated well. They are pleased with new communication pathways that the Library has opened: text, chat, and e-mail reference are winners.

The community continues to prefer learning how to use the Library on their own, with the Library website and librarians and staff, including subject librarians and liaisons, being the primary avenues of assistance. Not surprisingly, the online catalog, electronic databases, and the Library website are important to faculty. Summon and the Research Guides are more important to undergraduate students.

One of the positive features of using LibQUAL+ in the past was the ability to share results with other institutions. Dartmouth College Library is currently discussing with other academic libraries the possibility of developing a core set of questions based on the Triennial Survey that would replicate the type of sharing available in other standardized, international surveys. *John Cocklin*

This newsletter was compiled by the Matariki Network of Universities Library Benchmarking project team, with a special contribution from John Cocklin of Dartmouth College  
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