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A GOOD MIX OR FAR FROM IDEAL? INFORMATION LITERACY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND

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INTRODUCTION

The University of Auckland (UoA), established in 1883, is the largest university in New Zealand. The University consists of four campuses: the City Campus, Medical & Health Science Campus, North Shore Campus and the Tamaki Campus. In 2004 the University has over 33,000 students studying across eight faculties – Arts, Business & Economics, Creative Arts & Industries, Engineering, Law, Medical & Health Sciences, Science and Theology.

The University of Auckland Library consists of 12 subject specialist libraries and three Information Commons across four campuses. Multiple information skills programmes are offered at the University of Auckland Library. In this presentation we shall examine, as case studies, the effectiveness of the generic information skills programme offered at the UoA and the information skills programme in the Davis Law Library.

PART I – INFORMATION SKILLS GENERIC PROGRAMME AT UOA

The Information Skills team, is part of the Learning Services department, and was established in March 2002 as the result of restructuring within the University Library. The Information Skills team is responsible for coordinating information skills training across the Library system, organising generic information skills programmes and developing the Library's information literacy initiatives in partnership with faculty and Subject Librarians. Since the Information Skills team was established, the generic information skills programme has developed rapidly.

Generic information skills are an important part of the information skills programme. The University Library offers a wide range of generic information skill courses to all the faculties and across all year levels, including undergraduates, postgraduates and staff members.

In 2003 attendance at library generic courses has increased by 109% in comparison to 2002. Building on this growth, attendance again increased by 38% from January to June 2004 (refer to the statistical table below). The significant increase in attendance at optional generic courses indicates that students value library courses and are increasingly aware of developing information skills as part of their learning.

Statistics

Attendance at library generic courses, 2002-2004.

Teams	2002 vs. 2003		2003 vs. 2004	
	2002	2003	Jan-Jun 2003	Jan-Jun 2004
Total:	3217	6712	3752	5179
Increase:		109%		38%

The rapid growth in library course attendance may be attributed to the following factors: an easy online booking system (LEO); the wide range of library courses on offer, extensive marketing; the attraction of the new Information Commons; purpose-built teaching facilities; good teaching skills and innovative use of technology by library presenters.

LEO - LIBRARY EVALUATION AND ONLINE BOOKING SYSTEM

<http://www.library.auckland.ac.nz/booking/>

The LEO system is an in-house Library Evaluation and booking Online system, created in 2002 by the Library’s Digital Services team and the Information Skills team.

LEO enables librarians to advertise generic and subject-specific library courses, and allows UoA students and staff to book online. It emails reminders to the presenters and enrolled students the day before their courses. When a student enrolls for a course, he/she can find the venue by clicking on the map link on the LEO web site. The LEO link is also available on a database Connect page (all the UoA library databases have a Connect page) so students can book for a course from the Connect page as well. PDF versions of the course handouts are also available for students to download from the LEO web site.

LEO has raised the awareness of library courses amongst students and staff and has led to an increase in attendance in recent years.

WIDE RANGE OF LIBRARY COURSES ON OFFER

Attending generic library courses is voluntary. Hence, a wide range of generic courses must be offered to attract different types of UoA students and staff. For example,

- These courses are offered **for new students and staff members**: “*UoA Library Resources and Services Overview*”, “*Library Catalogue Voyager Introduction*”, “*UoA IT Access and Support*”, “*Information Commons Facilities*”, “*Database Search Skills*”.

- These courses are offered **for students doing coursework**: core faculty database courses, such as “*Expanded Academic Database*”, “*ProQuest Database*”, “*NZ Databases*”, etc.
- These courses are offered **for postgraduates and academic staff members**: “*Endnote with Library Databases*”, “*New Publications via Email Alerts*”, “*How to Search and Use Theses and Dissertations*”, “*Cited Reference Searching Skills*”, etc.
- These courses are offered **for all UoA staff and students**: “*How to Search and Use Online Books*”, “*How to Search and Use Online Journals*”, “*Internet Introduction*”, “*Google Tips, Tricks and More*”, etc.

Tailoring generic courses to the needs of specific groups has also contributed to the general increase in attendance.

MARKETING AND NEW LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Library courses are well advertised during the University orientation week at the start of each semester. Library course publications are also mailed out as part of the orientation package to all the newly enrolled students. Posters and course pamphlets covering 2-week period are distributed to the University Helpdesks, Library service desks, lecture theatres, posted on the postgraduate online board, and published in the weekly University publication – Next Week.

The prominence of the computer training rooms in the Information Commons building and excellent teaching facilities have indirectly led to an increase in library course attendance.

TEACHING QUALITY CONTROL

The LEO system also records details of all the library teaching courses, as well as feedback received through course evaluations. Participants are asked to evaluate library sessions. The student evaluation form and presenter’s form are available in both print format and e-format (online form). All the library presenters can access their teaching statistical reports and student feedback via the LEO website. This data is used to improve teaching quality and determine the most popular teaching times and periods.

According to the LEO statistical report, the generic Library courses receive very positive feedback from students. Approximately 85-90% of attendees “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to the evaluation statement that the course was taught effectively.

The professional development and support of librarians with a teaching role is a key focus area of the Learning Services department. Special training sessions are organised for all library course presenters: trainers from CPD (Centre of Professional Development) and a lecturer from the School of Education have been invited to offer 3 half-day teaching training courses and how to prepare for teaching sessions.

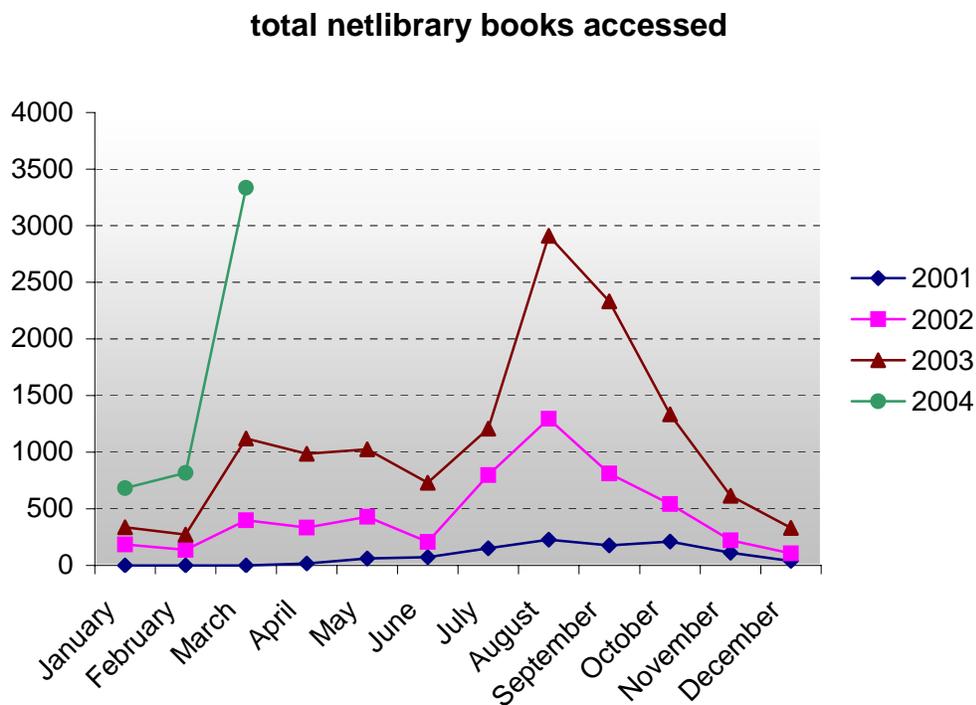
All new presenters are fully trained before they start teaching library courses. In addition to the teaching training, they develop IT skills, such as use of the e-lectern and new teaching equipment.

Because of the large number of students taking our courses at different times and in different locations, most generic courses are taught by more than two presenters. To ensure the consistency across courses, PowerPoint slides are used for these courses to standardise teaching. The PowerPoint teaching resources are shared and tailored by many Subject Librarians across library teams. Using PowerPoint also enables us to integrate multimedia into teaching. Movies, animated diagrams, images and sound are incorporated to enhance the learning experience.

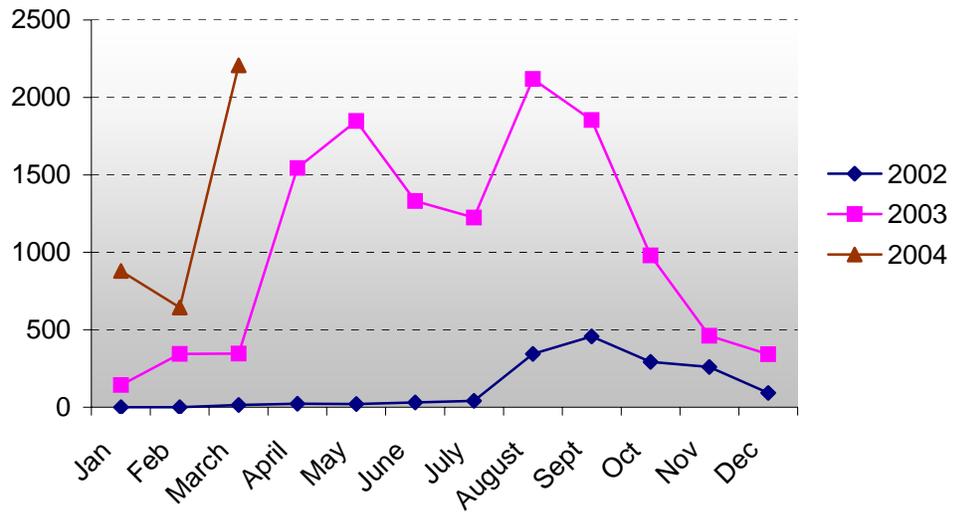
Presenters for each generic course meet regularly in order to improve teaching quality constantly. For example, in May 2004, all 12 Voyager course presenters had a brainstorming meeting to discuss ways to make the courses more effective. We analysed student feedback we had received and generated some innovative new ideas to improve the courses.

RESULTS OF GENERIC PROGRAMME

There has been an increase in the usage of databases as the result of the library courses. For example, the Library started to offer “*E-books, how to search and use online books*” in late February 2003. The course teaches how to search and use e-books from netLibrary and ebrary, commercial databases which have extensive collections of electronic books. The usage of netLibrary and ebrary books has increased dramatically since March 2003. Below are two diagrams showing the University of Auckland Library total usage of netLibrary ebooks and ebrary books in 2002, 2003 and Jan – March 2004.



ebrary user sessions



ISSUES AND CHALLENGES:

- Students enrolling, but not attending sessions. Most of the classes are voluntary and there is no compulsion or mark enticement for students to attend
- Many students comment after a session that “this course should be compulsory for all students”. However, it is still hard to target all the UoA students. Our extensive advertising of library courses has still not reached many of our student body.

FUTURE TRENDS

- Diversifying the nature of the library courses, such as: online tutorials, and self-paced learning, self-assessment quizzes.
- Embedding information literacy into the general education course curriculum.