

# The indispensable library

By Kaitlyn Woods

## Snapshot

Kaitlyn Woods explores the strategies embraced by the Learning Commons at Mater Christi College - flexible use of space, offering unique services and seeking out collaboration opportunities - that have helped them build their ideal of being 'more than a library'.

## Vision statement:

*The Learning Commons supports the College mission statement through the provision of an agile collaborative learning environment, which develops literacy proficiency and engages and enables creative, critical thinkers and ethical and effective users of information.*

## Introduction

The Learning Commons at Mater Christi College prides itself on being *More Than a Library* - that's our motto! It is a vibrant and active hub in the middle of the school servicing a community of around 700 students. But we've worked hard to live up to our tagline. Follow along for the three main ways we reach our staff and students...

## 1. The space

So far this term the Learning Commons has been transformed into:

- A cinema for lunchtime movie viewings
- A drone flying arena (with hoops hanging from the ceiling!)
- A fashion show catwalk
- An interview room for Year 9 Morrisby testing
- A game show panel for a Lego Building Challenge
- An art gallery

We are incredibly lucky to have a very flexible space! The tables can be flipped up, the chairs stack easily, and we have an Interactive Whiteboard on wheels with AirPlay capabilities. Our location also enables prime accessibility and visibility. This all means that we can arrange the Learning Commons to be anything anyone needs.

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When we see the opportunity to bring people in, we take it. One of our staff members has started an initiative called *Techie Tuesdays*, meeting with teachers one morning each week to get a better understanding of technology or software - but they were meeting in a dungeon downstairs! So, we offered them the use of our Seminar Room. This is a quiet, collaborative space with booths and TVs for screen sharing.

As well as being free in-house advertising to staff and students on the wonderful capabilities of the Learning Commons, it's a great opportunity for photos that demonstrate wonderful engagement and excitement.

By putting ourselves out there and telling staff to use our space, we become a part of every event in the school (usually) with minimal effort on our part. They already have the plans, but now we have a mutually beneficial goal. The library is constantly busy and bustling, with a new something on every week to garner excitement from students.

## 2. Services

We are heavily involved in all of the regular services you can expect from a library: research guides, referencing inductions, and resource provision. However, we also run a number of unique services you can't find anywhere else in the school.

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- **3D printing inductions:**

These workshops were built into the Year 9 curriculum some years ago through the hard work of our Teacher Librarians. Now I run them and am famous around the school for my tech mastery! Classes come in for a whole period to work with me to gain an understanding of why 3D printing is a valuable technology and how this unit helps build their skills.

- **VCAL marketing:**

I work with VCAL students to provide a marketing workshop on how I create displays in the Learning Commons. This involves a rundown of how to reach their target audience, basic design tips, and how to use Canva. They use this information to create their final product which takes the form of an event or program that relies heavily on marketing.

- **Fuse Cup:**

As of this year, one of our Teacher Librarians runs the training sessions for Fuse Cup - interschool eSports. Not only are students thrilled by the opportunity to use the Switch and we get lots of traffic and questions, it's also great for demonstrating the More Than a Library motto. This program is a way of promoting digital wellbeing and safety online, in line with being an eSmart School.

## 3. Collaboration

Key to those two strategies above is our love of collaboration and working with other learning teams. Similar to the multi-purpose use of our space, we think of ourselves as agile and multi-talented.

We are slowly becoming co-planners on every event in the school. International Women's Day, Social Justice Week, Pride Month, Science Week, HPE Week, you name it, we're a part of it.



Social Justice display: a collaborative display between the Social Justice leader and the SoJust Captains to celebrate both the CBCA Book Week theme *Dreaming with eyes open* and the environment. Also incorporated are the Year 7 sustainability sculptures.

- **STEM Committee**

Along with the Science and Maths Learning Leaders, we work with our Middle and Senior School STEM Captains to ensure our resources are fully recognised and utilised. I also ran the drone activity for the STEM Cup where students earned points for their Houses and worked closely with the STEM Team to ensure the library had a role in the Cup.

- **MakerSpace**

While our MakerSpace was previously hosted in isolation, I saw so much potential for teamwork when I got the chance to start running the sessions. There were so many staff around the school who had skills I didn't and who had ideas we could harness. I started inviting teachers to "take over" lunchtimes and it's evolved into so much more! Our activities were always themed according to the school calendar, but now they're incorporated instead of separate. It's clear from student feedback also that they now have a chance to engage differently than they would in the classroom and explore their passions freely through play. Now we have extensive planning sessions with each domain to use MakerSpace as a celebration of their passion and our resources.



MakerSpace equipment: a sample of what we provide to staff and students in our MakerSpace. The letters were decorated by students in a session at the beginning of the year.

- **Staff Book Club**

The Learning Commons has worked with the English team to develop a Staff Book Club on Friday afternoons in the library. With the aim of encouraging staff readership, it also models reading and discussion to our students. The reception so far has been wonderful and invites staff to experience the space in a much more mature context for their own learning.

## Conclusion

Becoming the heart of the school has been the result of our ability to communicate and to think creatively. We've made our services indispensable to the curriculum and to staff and students. It's of great benefit to the staff to use us as they require: our ability to be visible and reach a wide audience. But it also works in our favour. When I invite staff to collaborate on a display

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and a MakerSpace, it brings students and teachers into the library and gives them a sense of ownership over the space that we all desperately seek to foster. It is *their* space and these strategies for collaboration ensure that is not only spoken but felt.

***Kaitlyn Woods** is the Library Technician in the Learning Commons at Mater Christi College. She is passionate about student engagement, STEM integration with library services, and building exciting library programs. Kaitlyn is in her final year of the Bachelor of Information Studies at Charles Sturt University, grounding her wide practical knowledge with theory.*