

Library Learning Intentions and Descriptors for Ongoing Action Research

By Anne Whisken

Previous Learning Landscape articles by the author (Whisken, 2011 – 2016) have described the research and action learning undertaken by the Carey Library team as they provided input into the design process for the library section of the School's \$35 million Centre for Learning and Innovation. As the building was completed, and the library collection and services relocated, descriptors were developed to assist the school community understand the particular type of learning with information experience (Bruce 2008; Bruce et al, 2014) that each library space was designed to support. This in turn provides direction for students and staff as they deliberately choose the locations which will best facilitate the type of learning that they want to occur.

This article details the process of ongoing action research about whether the spaces achieve their intended purposes and provides the first in-action exploration of those descriptors – seen as the initial phase in an ongoing cycle of participatory co-design (Hughes, 2015).

Ongoing Action Research project

The library action learning team (ALT) is using participatory design to examine use of library resources (spaces, collections and service team) to build independent motivated users of information.

Guiding question

What learning experiences *a) about information use* are to take place in this school library as *b) information resources are used for c) curriculum learning purposes*?

Learning intention: That students will build skills and knowledge to become independent motivated learners able to distinguish which library information resources can be used for particular curriculum learning, select those most appropriate and know how to use them properly.

Process: To achieve those information experiences for learning, library users will be provided with guidance to learn how to choose and properly use the most appropriate information resources of the library spaces (and furniture), collections (book), technology and staff for their own identified learning purpose.

Research questions

- What are the specific information experience learning intentions for use of each of the information resources of spaces, collections and technology?
 - What is the user experience of those resources?
 - How well do these information resources provide and support the learning that is intended and how well are they being used?
- What are the specific learning intentions about assisting students to become independent motivated information users which guide staffing models?
 - How are these staff models being experienced by library users?
 - How well do the staffing service models support the learning that is intended?

Methodology

Creative thinking about how the library resources are being used follows the participatory designing (Hughes, 2015) structure of four inter-connected continuous phases:

- Imagining: (the initial process)
- Transitioning (creating and moving in)
- Experiencing: (discovering the new space's actual and potential learning utility)
- Re-imagining: (what next?).

Three distinct library areas are identified for investigation: spaces, collections, and staffing, with technology use an integral part of each.

Spaces: Timetabled and bookable spaces

Imagining: Extensive international, national and in-house action research led to design of the current spaces, resource arrangements and furniture to facilitate specific learning.

Transitioning: The ALT team will re-examine the learning intentions and select appropriate ways of measuring whether those intentions are achieved. Part of this will be exploration and development of RM-Expert, the school's booking system, to meet the needs of users as they book and utilise the library spaces for their learning purposes.

Experiencing: After moving in, data is being collected in terms 3 and 4, with analysis and reporting at the end of Term 4, including analysis of the booking software.

Re-Imagining: Recommendations will be made for changes where required. If possible, alterations will be ready for 2017.

Collections

Imagining: Research across current literature and within the current library have led to 'collectionisation' of the resources to reflect curriculum foci and reader browsing habits. The new library space has been built to house these collections, using book walls instead of the more traditional library stack shelving. Spydus library software guides users to collection locations. Bibliotheca was selected to manage use of those resources.

Transitioning: The library team estimated the shelving required for each of the existing and new collection arrangements, then determined which shelving area in the new library best suited each collection, and mapped it on the plans. This took into account usage and anticipated traffic patterns and the need to promote particular resources. Collections were be labelled to map their destination locations in order to guide the moving firm. A map is being developed to guide users, in both hard copy and digital format.

Experiencing: now the collections are place, they are being monitored for effectiveness of location, and already some changes have been made. The capacity of Spydus and Bibliotheca to manage use of these collections is part of that process, as is physical and digital signage to guide users. These observations will be reviewed and reported in Term 4

Re-Imagining: Recommendations will be made for changes where required. If possible, alterations to locations will be ready for 2017. Permanent signage will be ordered to guide users to locations of collections.

HelpZone Service Model

Learning intention: that library users will learn how to find and use the specialist information use experiences provided by the library: spaces, collections, technology and staff.

Question: What style of service model best suits that learning intention?

Research: The new research-based service model developed by University of NSW (O'Dwyer, 2015) using participatory design produced a radical change to traditional service models. Using retailing and banking examples, such as Apple iStores, the new Helpzone has three strategic goals:

1. active welcome with staff approaching users to meet and greet
2. self-service rather than staff service
3. use of library without staff guidance.

This brings an attitude of staff-user interface for the intention of *user-enabling* rather than for *service*. In such a model, staff work side by side with users; information kiosks and clear signage like those in shopping centres enable self-direction; and users operate self-check loans and returns stations. A participatory design process at State Library of Victoria (Conyer, 2015) has produced a similar front-of-house service model.

Process: The University of NSW three strategic goals (O'Dwyer, 2015) were used to plan Carey's new library Helpzone service model, with additional research conducted by staff to compare that to other new models in schools, universities and public libraries via the methodology of participatory design.

- **Imagining and Transitioning:** In May and June staff developed the policies and procedures to produce an operating model to take into the new space. Bibliotheca was selected for the library self-loans system, and evaluation of ways to use it to maximise user experience is part of the ALT. RMEExpert was selected as a way of managing and guiding use of library spaces, so in addition to adapting it to the library's purpose, its usefulness in guiding users on their entry to the library will be evaluated.
- **Experiencing:** Staff are gathering data in Terms 3 and 4 to establish and report on whether those three goals are being met in the new space, and report.
- **Relmaging:** Staff will review the Term 4 report to refine the model for Semester One 2017, gathering data and further refining as required.

Library learning spaces

Library learning spaces have been designed for the specific purpose of learning with information and learning with narrative, and is largely based on research involving the information experience (Bruce, 2008) and guided inquiry (Kuhlthau, Maniotes & Caspari, 2007). The learning involved is a continuum in which students develop the content and skills for independent lifelong information-use expertise and wide reading, by:

- variation of implicit and explicit expert information-use experiences across subjects and
- repeated experiences of sustained immersion in increasingly complex authoritative, level-appropriate non-fiction and fiction texts.

The new Library learning spaces deliberately situate students in particular learning conformations involving specific arrangements of furniture and resource collections. By variation of these specific learning experiences across subjects through the year levels, students gradually develop the physical and 'mind-muscle' memory required to know how to mindfully replicate these experiences and habits themselves as independent learners and readers.

These spaces are staffed by people qualified to team-teach in the planning, resourcing and delivery of learning activities involving information use and wide reading. The library collections, online and on shelves, are their teaching resources. By involving them in the planning and delivery of learning experiences, teachers ensure that best-practice resources and guidance are provided, that explicit

attention is brought to the reasons for selection and use of particular information and narratives, and students learn that there are information and reading experts who can assist their own developing expertise.

Timetabling and booking policies have been developed for the library learning spaces. Teachers can refer to them when they design activities which need appropriate spaces in which to learn explicit use of information from authoritative and level-appropriate resources, to bring attention to particular aspects involved in that process, and to develop the habits of sustained immersion in fiction and non-fiction text. They can select and book the particular library learning spaces, collections and staff to best support that learning.

A distinction is made between *timetabling* and *booking*. Timetabling is a permanent semester or term booking of a space, while booking is occasional. Most Library learning spaces should be categorised as being for booking purposes only, as they are designed for particular learning purposes at particular times in the context of subject learning units. Timetabling needs to be limited otherwise access is denied to the contextual and occasional use by teachers across years and subjects. Wide Reading classes are obvious examples of where timetabling is necessary.

Space learning descriptors

The new Library learning spaces are described below, with detail about the furniture and collection arrangements and the learning experience that is intended for the space. The whole building has a ground floor and three floors above and one lower ground level. The library sits on three levels: two ground floor levels – quadrangle and oval - and one lower ground level.

Ground floor – Quad level

Two sets of Library entry doors open from the new Information Commons which is a broad concourse adjacent to the Senior School Quad. The Quad is a huge covered senior school social space with a canteen, which opens through lounge areas to north-facing full length doors, and ascending to the first floor of the new Centre via stepped forum seating. Both Library and ICT operate from this Information Commons, with the Library Middle School Lounge and Helpzone on one side and the ICT LINK service centre on the other.



Information Commons

HelpZone

- Library information/ help desk
- Provides for the experience of expert 'concierge' style guided direction to spaces, collections and online resources
- Cross references with ICT LINK help desk to encompass front line assistance and direction to all Carey's information systems.



Library HelpZone

ICT Sandpit

- eLearning makerspace
- Benches, stools, learning technology demonstration areas
- Provides for the experience of exploring the latest learning hardware and software technology with expert student and staff tech teams to provide guidance



ICT Sandpit

Carey Café

- Long high bench with 10 stools, newspapers, current affairs journals, newly-arrived senior fiction
- Provides for the experience of a casual café drop-in space to read papers and journals with tea or coffee; for collaborative learning, team teaching, professional development and meetings; and to browse the new books display



Carey Café

Research Room 1

- Traditional classroom arrangement of screen, tables and chairs
- 'Collectionised' Modern History non-fiction collections wrap around walls
- Provides for the experience of expert guidance in use of authoritative and level appropriate resources, in class or small groups, or for individual focused immersion.
- Can book the ancillary Balcony 1 breakout space.



Research Room 1

Balcony 1

- Long high bench & 10 stools for study, overlooking Library Hall and Oval
- 'Collectionised' non-fiction around low walls
- Adjacent to Research Room 1. Can be booked as breakout space for Research Room 1 class.
- Provides for the experience of individual or small group work, with alternative seating arrangements.



Balcony 1

Research Room 2

- Traditional classroom arrangement of screen, tables and chairs
- 'Collectionised' non-fiction collections wrap around walls
- Provides for the experience of expert guidance in use of authoritative and level appropriate resources, in large or small groups, or for individual focused immersion.
- Can book the ancillary Balcony 2 breakout space.

Balcony 2

- Long high bench & 10 stools for study, overlooking Library Hall and Oval
- 'Collectionised' non-fiction around low walls
- Adjacent to Research Room 1. Can be booked as breakout space for Research Room 2 class.
- Provides for the experience of individual or small group work, with alternative seating arrangements.

Middle School Lounge

- Waiting/reading area, tub chairs & tables, bench & stools
- Newspapers, journals, popular reading, promotional area
- Open and busy space with a variety of seating arrangements. Before school and during breaks it provides experience of a social space rich with engaging reading resources. During class times, can be used as a breakout space from library classes, or as a study space for any year level student.



Middle School Lounge

Lower ground floor – Sandell Oval level

The library descends a half floor down forum stepped seating – the Landing - from the Middle School Lounge to provide a southerly vista over the oval and surrounding suburbs. The Library Hall at this level contains book walls several metres high which wrap around study areas and the Fireside Lounge.

Landing

- Stepped seating down to Library Hall from MS Lounge, with mobile screen for presentations
- Provides for the experience of whole group presentations about information resource use as well as group or individual learning activities on the steps.
- Library Hall tables and chairs and study booths are automatically booked as ancillary break out learning spaces for small group or independent work.



Stepped seating down to Library Hall

Library Hall

- Groups of tables with 6-8 chairs, scattered amongst shelves, and 6-8 person study booths.
- Book walls hold 'genreified' fiction, and non-fiction collections. Low shelves hold board games and displays of popular journals and graphic novels
- OPACs and Self Check Kiosks
- Provides for the experience of small group or independent study with information and fiction resources, as well as break-time fun with games and popular reading
- Adjacent Landing is automatically included with this booking to provide for whole class presentation.



Library Hall

Fireside Lounge

- Gas log fire, lounge & chairs for individual reading
- Book walls hold 'genrefied' fiction
- Provides experience of choosing to be immersed in narrative in open spaces with distraction. It is automatically booked with timetabling or booking for Wide Reading room 2



Fireside Lounge

Lower ground floor quiet zone spaces

Another half floor level down from the Library Hall is a quiet and silent study zone, including silent study carrels, seminar rooms, a quiet study area for small groups, and two wide reading rooms. Light wells bring daylight down into the study spaces and reading rooms. No mobile phone use is allowed.

Wide Reading Room 1

- Individual lounge chairs and structured bean bags
- 'Genrefied' fiction collections wrap around the walls
- Provides experience of immersion in narrative in quiet and silence.



Wide Reading Room 1

Wide Reading 2

- Individual lounge chairs and structured bean bags
- 'Genrefied' fiction collections wrap around the walls

- Provides experience of immersion in narrative in quiet and silence
- Has Fireside Lounge automatically booked as additional ancillary reading experience



Wide Reading Room

PERMA Seminar Rooms 1 to 5

PERMA is an acronym used in the school for the five key strands of positive psychology applied in the school as a key learning: (P) Positive Emotion; (E) Engagement; (R) Positive Relationships; (M) Meaning; and (A) Accomplishment/Achievement. Each of the seminar rooms is named for one of these, and has distinctive colouring.

- Each room has a central table with 6 to 8 chairs, depending on size of the room
- Provides for the experience of collegial, collaborative learning for senior students who book space for particular learning purposes, mindful of wise use responsibilities.



Senior School Quiet Study Zone

- Tables and chairs for individual and paired quiet study
- Provides for the experience of focused quiet study for Senior School students.

Silent Study Hall

- 27 individual study carrels
- Provides experience of individual silent study for Senior School students.

Harkness Seminar Room

- Large oval table with 18 chairs, screen, writing walls
- Provides experience of Harkness teaching and learning, which has priority use of the space. The Harkness teaching method has students and teacher seated in the round discussing prepared topics in detail, providing opportunities for in depth airing of opinions leading to confident critical thinking.

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