

21st century learning in The Lilley Centre

By Cathy Oxley

In an age of technological imperative, Brisbane Grammar School had a vision ahead of its time when its new Learning Centre – The Lilley Centre – was planned 10 years ago, a vision that has now placed it at the forefront as a school leading the way with innovation in e-learning. The completion of this Centre has taken the school firmly into the 21st century, and the learning developed here will equip students with the skills they will need to become flexible and innovative, reflective and critical thinkers.

The new Learning Centre is named after Sir Charles Lilley, a premier and Chief Justice of Queensland during the late 1800s, a passionate advocate for education and an inaugural trustee of the Brisbane Grammar School Board when the school first opened. He was a visionary in the field of education, and not only was instrumental in establishing Brisbane Grammar School but also in looking into the establishment of a university in Brisbane, so it is a fitting reminder of his vision and leadership to have our new Centre named in his honour.

The Lilley Centre is built on four levels with the library located on the ground floor at the entry to the building from the school. It's at the heart of the new building, with the front desk the welcome point for the whole Learning Centre. According to the Headmaster, Brian Short, "We are changing the paradigm of learning at BGS, and we have very firmly and deliberately placed the library at the centre of that change". BGS has not only been ahead of its counterparts in the type of building created, but in an era of very uncertain times for teacher-librarians, when many schools are choosing to replace their teacher-librarians with support staff, BGS instead has taken the important step of adding a Director of Information Services and two new teacher-librarians to the current library staff – powerfully stating that we recognise the vital role that teacher-librarians play within a school particularly in driving literacy, critical analysis and a passion for reading.



In addition to the library at its heart, the Lilley Centre has its heritage as both its foundation and outlook. At the lowest level of the building, but with a view to the gardens outside, an airy, purpose-built space houses the school archives – a fitting collection of past academic, sporting and cultural successes to have as the foundation for a new era of learning. The building also reflects the past in the shape of the magnificent original Great Hall, built in 1881, and a fitting symbol of strength and solidity. The new Centre was deliberately located so as not to overshadow this building but to reflect its beauty in the two-storey glass windows – a reflection which can be seen by the public as they drive down the busy main road adjoining the school. The juxtaposition of a magnificent heritage with a modern new building is a constant reminder to both students and staff of the achievements of the past and the excitement of the future.

While the architecture and fit-out of the building have been carefully planned and orchestrated, there is no roadmap for the learning journey that the teachers and students have already embraced - with a large dose of enthusiasm and a small dose of trepidation. For what we are about to embark on, no curriculum has been written – it will be a matter of forging the way forward, with a fluid vision to prepare the students for the futures they will face. The classrooms in which this learning will take place are

flexible learning spaces which can be adjusted on demand, with a double classroom space on the top floor, and a four classroom space on the lower floor.

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Each classroom is equipped with laptops, LCD screens, document cameras and data projectors in a bid to create the best possible environment for e-learning to occur. Head of Middle School, Jacqui Zervos, sums up the thinking of the school by saying, “I am sure that we will reshape our curriculum in very meaningful ways through the

opportunities that are now afforded by the specialist teaching spaces”.

Student Services, comprising, academic and careers advice, personal counselling and the Seniors’ Room share the top floor of the building while IT staff and teacher aides, who provide essential support to staff and students, share the workroom on the lower ground floor. On the same level as the library, the Forum and the Learning Commons are two exciting spaces with great potential for current and future learning and collaboration. The booths in the Learning Commons, with their modern seating and LCD screens, invite student interaction, while the Forum offers the facility to connect and collaborate with classrooms across Australia or around the world – a significant feature when delivering 21st Century learning.

We all have a challenging but rich and exciting future ahead of us, with unbelievable potential for meaningful learning and seamless global connections, but in the words of **David Stuart** (University of Wolverhampton, UK): “Those who gain the most from the web will be those at the forefront of change, not those playing catch-up”.

See also:

Willson architects, World Architecture News.com http://www.worldarchitecturenews.com/index.php?fuseaction=wanappln.projectview&upload_id=13408

Editor’s note:

At a recent School Library Association of QLD, Brisbane Subcommittee Annual General Meeting, Anne Weaver took a series of pictures of the new facilities at Brisbane Boys Grammar. These photographs can be viewed as a slide show on her blog at: [com/2010/03/18/space-out/](http://www.anneweaver.com/2010/03/18/space-out/). Anne is the Secretary of the School Library Association of QLD, Brisbane Subcommittee, and Head of Library and Information Services at All Hallows’ School in Brisbane.

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