

University of Newcastle Library

Report from the Information Access Policy Focus Sessions

Background

During the 2nd half of 2004 the Library developed a discussion paper and project proposal <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/services/library/policies/iap-review.html> for a review of the Information Access Policy. The Information Access Policy covers a range of library activities including collection development, subject gateways and lending policy. The aim of the review is to develop a new overarching policy which is responsive to the teaching, learning and research needs of the University community.

The discussion paper was divided into 2 sections:-

1. Identifying information needs
2. Lending activity

1. Identifying information needs

The results of the 2004 Rodski Survey indicated that there was room for improvement in the development of the monograph (book) collections. Written comments suggest that the library is not purchasing enough books in certain disciplines eg Engineering and computer sciences, and more up to date resources were required across most subject areas. Analysis of the library's book selection processes provided the following focus areas for discussion:-

- The role of the Library Liaison officer in selecting materials to support teaching, learning and research activities
- The currency of items cited on course reading lists
- The provision of set texts and multiple copies for 3 day loan and Short Loan
- The use of the inter-campus loan service to share resources across the University libraries

2. Lending activity

An analysis of loan activity was undertaken to determine whether library materials were accessible to staff and students of the University. The last major review was undertaken in 1991 when the Library's current library system was implemented although there had been some changes to certain privilege levels over the ensuing years. Data and feedback from staff indicated several areas for review. These included:-

- Unlimited loan renewals – material could be on loan to the same client for indefinite periods of time
- Number of holds available to reserve material on loan to another client and for requesting materials from other branch libraries
- Lending of print journals
- Undergraduate and honours privilege levels to be consolidated
- Post Graduate students (by Research) to be fined for not responding to overdue recall notices
- Loan limits for staff and withdrawal of privileges for material that had reached the invoicing stage.

Consultation with stakeholders and approval process

Via the Library Website

The discussion paper was available via the Library's website with an invitation for comment. Three emails were received from members of academic staff for consideration.

The Faculty Librarians also contacted their client groups asking for comment.

Focus sessions

A series of Focus Sessions were held during November/December for the following client groups:-
Faculty sessions (Engineering and Built Environment (2); Science and Information Technology;
Business and Law; Health/Education and Arts.

NUPSA Executive and NUSA (Education Officer & Incoming President)

The Ourimbah Campus

An **Advisory Group** with representatives from the client groups including NUPSA and NUSA, as well as library staff, will consider the recommendations arising from the focus sessions. Feedback will be consolidated into a list of recommendations which will be passed to US-ET and the President of Academic Senate for consideration.

Feedback, comments and recommendations

The Focus Sessions provided a forum to discuss the issues raised in the discussion paper. Overall, the majority of recommendations associated with the book selection and lending policies were supported. Feedback has been incorporated under the various sections and noted accordingly. The Forums have also been useful for promoting existing services eg the new book notification service.

Identifying information needs

The following strategies were identified:-

1. **Course reading lists** - there was strong support to work with the library to ensure that all course reading lists were updated. In 2005 the library will collect and review all course reading lists subject to availability of staffing resources.
2. **Publishers alerts** – the academic profiles for alerting Library Liaison officers and other interested members of staff of new titles in their disciplines to be updated.
3. **Electronic books** – the library will endeavour to increase the awareness of electronic book subscriptions.
4. **Text books** – a review of the text book ordering processes will be undertaken to ensure that the library acquires copies of recommended text books. A copy of every text will be placed in Short Loan (currently 75%).
5. **New book lists** – the library will promote the new book notification service to all clients
6. **Inter campus loans service** – this service will be significantly enhanced in 2005 with the introduction of the BONUS system providing access to the combined book holdings of UTS, UNSW and CSU. The quota for placing requests for items held in other libraries (University of Newcastle and BONUS participants) will be increased from 4 to 10 requests.

Lending activity

Renewals: An overview of the unlimited loan renewal policy indicates that some material has been on loan to the same client for over 10 years. An analysis of the lending statistics indicates that there are 4,583 items currently on loan have been renewed over 50 times. Of these, 256 items were borrowed before 1.1.96. 1,225 items have been on loan to the same patron since 1.1.02. Overall, the ease of renewing material via the Web has encouraged patrons to borrow material for extended periods of time which in turn, has reduced the availability of these resources for the wider community. There was overwhelming support to introduce limits on the number of loan renewals available to all client categories to ensure that material was eventually returned to the library and made available to other clients.

Holds: A reduction in the number of renewals combined with an increase in the number of Holds available from 4 to 10, will increase the availability of library resources for all client groups. Introduction of sanctions for not returning recalled items on loan to Post graduate students and members of staff, would also increase availability of high demand materials. Increasing the number of Holds will also allow clients to request materials from other university libraries including the BONUS resource sharing system. The library would promote this service to all client categories.

Serial (journal) loans appear to be working well as material is circulated within a short time frame with a very low level of overdue being recorded. Therefore, no changes to the current policy are recommended.

3 day loans: The 3 day loan category is also effective with 94% of material at this status being lent. Of these, 37% of 3 day loan items have been borrowed more than 20 times. Use of this loan category will be promoted for items which are listed on course reading lists. 3 day loans will have a limit of one renewal.

Loan privileges

A detailed overview of borrowing privileges was presented at the Forums. Areas for particular attention included problems associated with the Honours category:-

- 4th year students can be enrolled in the same course as Honours students can have different privilege levels (Undergraduate) due to the NUSTAR program code.
- 4th and 5th year students may be required to complete a thesis in a final year program and are classified as undergraduate students. If the Honours category was extended to all 4th and 5th year students access to undergraduate materials could be decreased as more material would be out for longer guaranteed loan periods (see next point).

- Items on loan to honours students have a 4 week guaranteed loan period, meaning that the resource is unavailable to other patrons for a 4 week period, including extensions. All other patron categories (including staff) require recalled material to be returned within a 2 week period from the day that the material is lent.

In order to address these problems, a proposal to combine and enhance the Undergraduate and Honours privilege categories was supported by all Focus sessions.

Revised loan privileges:-

Undergraduate (Ptype 1, 6 and 10)

The new undergraduate category will apply to all undergraduate students including those undertaking an Honours program. The number of items available for loan will increase from 12 to 15. Medical and Health Sciences undergraduates (Ptype 6) will also have access to Medical Reserve and John Hunter Hospital items. Students enrolled in music studies (Ptype 10) will have access to music scores.

- 15 books for 2 weeks and 15 audiovisual items for 1 week
- Minimum loan period of 14 days from date of checkout for 2 week loan items
- Limit of 5 renewals for book loans providing a maximum loan period of 84 days.
- Number of holds available to be increased from 4 to 10.

Undergraduate – Architecture and Design (Ptype 8)

Architecture students can borrow journals within their subject area for studio work. Feedback suggests that this is a highly valued service with 27% of journal loans attributed to architecture students. Although the lending of serials was introduced to avoid mutilation of issues, the physical condition of the architecture journals is a source of concern. A suggestion to review the lending of journals to Architecture students would be considered in 12 months with warnings displayed reminding students that if material continues to be damaged, lending of journals may be restricted. The library will also place a scanner in the Flowers Room adjacent to the Architecture journals.

- 15 books for 2 weeks and 15 audiovisual items for 1 week
- Minimum loan period of 14 days from date of checkout for 2 week loan items
- Limit of 5 renewals for book loans providing a maximum loan period of 84 days.
- Number of holds available to be increased from 4 to 10.
- 2 journals for 3 days with one renewal.

Postgraduate by Coursework – Masters and PhD (Ptype 19)

No changes to the current privilege level with the exception of a restriction on the number of renewals. Fines are charged for overdue items ensuring that material is generally returned on time:-

- 20 books for 28 days plus 15 audiovisual items for 1 week
- Minimum loan period of 28 days from date of checkout
- Limit of 3 renewals for book loans providing a maximum loan period of 84 days.
- Number of holds available to be increased from 4 to 10.
- 2 journals for 3 days with one renewal.

Postgraduate by Research – Masters and PhD (Ptype 4)

The level of overdue for this patron category is high with 33% of students having overdues. 16% have overdue recalls ie items required by another client. A proposal to fine Postgraduate students for failing to return recalled material was discussed and supported at all focus sessions on the proviso that the students be given adequate notification of the changes in policy. The recent introduction of courtesy email notices will also remind clients that a loan has to be returned before the due date.

It was also suggested that notification of non-compliance with library policy by postgraduate students be integrated into the annual review that is performed with supervisors for extreme incidents. Warning letters may be sent to post graduate students with overdue material advising them that if non-compliance continues a letter will be sent to their supervisor

Privileges are:-

- Loan limit of 50 items (44 books and 6 journals)
- Minimum loan period of 14 days from date of checkout
- Limit of 1 renewal for book loans providing a maximum loan period of 168 days
- Number of holds increased from 4 to 10
- 6 journals for 3 days with one renewal
- Standard fine of 50 cents per day to apply to recalled material which has not been returned by the recall date.
- Borrowing privileges to be withdrawn for overdue items

Staff - general and academic (Ptype 3)

Discussion focused on 2 areas; number of items available for loan and management of overdues and debts. Although the current policy restricts the number of loans to 50, this is not enforced. Despite this, the number of patrons who have more than 100 items on loan is minimal (<13). A proposal to increase the number of items to 75 which is enforced was supported at all focus sessions.

The other area of concern is the level of debt owing for items which have reached the invoicing stage ie 100 days overdue. In 1995, Academic Senate approved a recommendation to withdraw borrowing privileges for overdue recall items and/or for invoiced items. The sanction was enforced on a case by case basis. The focus sessions supported the recommendation to withdraw borrowing rights from any staff member who failed to return recalled material or had invoiced items. Feedback from 2 sessions indicated a preference for 2 renewal periods rather than 1. (For consideration).

- Loan limit of 75 items (69 books and 6 journals)
- Minimum loan period of 14 days from date of checkout
- Limit of 1 renewal for book loans providing a maximum loan period of 168 days (request to consider 2 renewal periods for a maximum loan period of 252 days)
- Number of holds increased from 4 to 10
- 6 journals for 3 days with one renewal
- Borrowing privileges withdrawn for overdue recalls and invoiced items

Implementation and communication strategy

Ideally, any changes to loan privileges need to be enabled before the commencement of the academic year. Time is required to adjust the Library Management System and write new loan rules for the Post Graduate category. The most critical aspect of the project is effective communication to ensure that the university community is aware of the changes. Accordingly, a "Communication Strategy" will be developed to promote the changes and enhancements to the service. The library will work closely with NUSA and NUPSA to ensure that all possible means of effective communication are used.

The introduction of limits for loan renewals is a major change to existing practice and will require special attention. Accordingly, the library will be providing advice to students on how to best manage their renewal quotas as well as promote the new courtesy email notice service. Not charging fines for several weeks following the introduction of the renewal limits will also assist students as well as provide a positive public relations opportunity. Likewise an amnesty for clearing billing fees for staff with long term overdue items would also result in a higher level of return.

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gwa:comments and feedback report