Moving Toward the Online Library

Ms. Helen Livingston
Acting University Librarian
Deakin University
E-mail: helen@deakin.edu.au
http://www.deakin.edu.au

Introduction

Deakin University is a metropolitan and regionally based university with six campuses in the Australian State of Victoria. Its 1999 student population totalled 28,000 people, with 16,000 studying on-campus and 12,000 studying off-campus. In addition, a further 40,000 students study through the University’s commercial arm, Deakin Australia, which provides training and higher education opportunities to staff of corporations and government departments and to members of professional associations. Since its inception, Deakin University has been renowned for its excellent distance education programs, providing higher education opportunities to people who, for reasons of remoteness or inability to attend traditional on-campus universities, chose to study remotely. The student population is drawn principally from Victoria, but also from other parts of Australia and overseas. In recent years, Deakin University, and many others in Australia has increased its enrolment of overseas-resident students.

Deakin University Library provides access to as many services as possible online. Students are assisted in accessing the online services provided through, the Library's live web pages, but also through the Deakin Learning Toolkit.

Deakin Learning Toolkit

The Deakin Learning Toolkit is a cd rom of software and information resources distributed to all of Deakin's students and staff. It provides software and information and gateways to support the IT based flexible learning and teaching programs of the University. The Deakin Learning Toolkit facilitates and encourages the use of IT facilities to enhance both remote and on campus students learning experience.

The Deakin Learning Toolkit contains software that is of general use to the students such as:

- Netscape Communicator
- Eudora for email
- anti-viral programs
- Adobe Acrobat reader to view pdf documents
- commercial computer based training modules.
- Installation kit for Internet access

FirstClass conferencing software is also included as part of the University's flexible learning and teaching.
There is also software to enhance access to Library information resources such as:

- WebSirs/WinSirs/MacSirs for database access
- Endnote. For bibliography construction

In total there are 24 software programs for Windows and 20 for Macintosh packaged on the Toolkit for students to install and use. Manuals and guides are provided in pdf format.

Other information on the Deakin Learning Toolkit to assist students in using University services and facilities includes:

- Undergraduate and Postgraduate Handbooks are accessible through a web browser
- Library discipline based subject guides.
- Three Library created tutorials:
  - Using the Internet for Research Tutorial,
  - EndNote Tutorial
  - Accessing SilverPlatter ERL databases tutorial.

The Deakin Learning Toolkit acts as a portal into Deakin and external web sites giving the students access to:

- Online conferencing
- Library online help
- Library indexing and abstracting services
- Electronic full text journals
- On line study guides
- Access to Study skills material
- Online career and health advice

To enhance the services provided on and through the Deakin Learning Toolkit the Library also provides:

- Telephone Enquiry Service
- Off campus Library delivery service

Library staff produced three tutorials to assist students in learning how to use the new electronic services, after student focus groups identified this as a top priority. These were – Internet Searching, Use of End Note (bibliographic software) and Use of Web/Win/MacSirs for searching the Silver Platter ERL databases.

Students also required easy electronic access to both databases and the Library catalogue, as well as an ability to submit requests for material electronically. The Toolkit provides an electronic forms section enabling submission of requests while on line, and email access through Eudora.
More than 37% of off campus requests for library materials are now received electronically, doubling in two years. The Web/Win/MacSpirs software enables easy access to and searching of over 150 electronic databases while Adobe Acrobat software allows easy reading of full text articles, particularly those containing graphics.

The Library maintains a library conference site, an FAQ site and a watching brief on all Student Services and Post Graduate conferences. Additionally, it provides, through the Library Home Page, an electronic “suggestion box” and an electronic “information desk”, while the Off Campus Library Service deals with email enquiries from external students. Up to 100 people may read individual messages posted or queries answered by Library staff on the conferences. As many as 200 email enquiries are received from external students each month, the majority being answered within 24 hours.

Students required access to electronic documents such as past exam papers and lecture and tutorial notes, and an ability to view details of their library borrowings. This is possible for both on campus and external students, with the added bonus that all students may now renew their loans and check penalty points for late returns of books while on line.

A full library service is provided for all external students, irrespective of where they live. Books and photocopies are supplied, with a pre-paid return bag included for books, a near unique feature in distance education library services. Return airmail postage for overseas students. Students can request items by mail, phone, fax, email, Web form and direct on line order from the Library catalogue, while a phone service is staffed 12 hours a day. A “subject request” service is also available to assist with information for assignments and projects. In 1998, 82,000 requests were processed, with 55,000 books and 22,000 photocopies being supplied and 1,000 subject requests handled.

**Library Home Page**

Deakin University Library's web offerings are mirrored in both the Deakin Learning Toolkit and The Library home page.

Elements and issues considered in designing the home page were:

- relative simplicity - easy to use / intuitive
- text descriptions of links
- making the Library Web Catalogue prominent
- shortcuts to high use options
- the 'style' had to be carried through the site and onto the Catalogue
- it had to be informative, interesting and enticing!

Key elements covered are:

- Search the Catalogue
- Information Resources
- Library Services
- Assistance and Training
The Library uses the Innopac integrated library management system. The Web Catalogue was introduced in 1998, keeping a text interface within the Library. In 1999 WebPac was introduced within the Library, although a telnet version is still available, it is not given prominence.

The WebPac was designed in conjunction with the home page and customised to suit Deakin's requirements. The Library is continuing to refine the design to improve service. Within the Library, to overcome the issues of catalogue users surfing the web, a software 'mask' solution was introduced. The Library selected the NetShift software to provide a control over a browser on the public access catalogue PCs. NetShift disables the operating system and browser and becomes the interface to the application.

Within the catalogue the Library has 'hot' linked all its electronic resources. This integrated approach ensures that all formats are available via the catalogue, the controlled vocabulary and powerful search capabilities of the catalogue provide precise access to titles and users have only one place to look to find information.

Only URLs contained in the Library's catalogue can be accessed through these workstations. However, Library users can still surf the net from EIW's.

In order to assist students the Library has created a 'form' index of reading list material. A student need only know their unit name or code to easily access catalogue records for their required and recommended reading materials. If the reading material is electronic a hot link click will deliver it, otherwise students can request the items.

Finally, some URLs:

- Deakin University Library Home Page  http://www.deakin.edu.au/library/
- Library WebPac  http://library.deakin.edu.au
- NetShift software  http://www.netshift.co.uk