

Finding a new voice: keys to building successful online communities

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Abstract:

This paper examines La Trobe University Library's experience in adopting Web 2.0 technologies to build and increase interaction with their online community. Examples discussed include the library blog and LMS discussion threads. The content, participation, and online conversation in these examples are examined and analysed with a view to understanding key elements in building successful online communities.

1. Introduction

It is important to understand the concept of an online community in order to understand its nature in regard to academic libraries. In 2000, Preece identified interaction, participation and collaboration as key elements in defining an online community:

'An online community consists of people who interact socially as they strive to satisfy their own needs or perform special roles; a shared purpose that provides a reason for the community; policies that guide people's interactions; and computer systems to support and mediate social interaction and facilitate a sense of togetherness.'

There is even more emphasis on social interaction in the current Web 2.0 environment. Online communities are now typified by the extent to which users can contribute content, a high degree of personalisation, interaction and collaboration. It is an environment based on open communication, decentralisation of authority, and the freedom to share and re-use content. It is generally acknowledged that these principles mean 'Web 2.0 is an attitude not a technology.' (Davis 2005)

For libraries the attitude of Web 2.0 is embodied in Library 2.0,ⁱ and it is central to our understanding of the potential of our online communities to be more than a one-way flow of information. Library 2.0 represents a more participatory service model that takes services to where users are. It is a client-centred, interactive and innovative approach to service in an online environment. For academic libraries, this means that their online community encompasses both isolated individual activity and new modes of interpersonal connection and interaction in relation to discovery, access and creation of scholarly information. While library online communities have always had a shared purpose around which they are active, the Library 2.0 model means this community has higher visibility and there is more emphasis on interactivity.

There is no doubt that incorporating a Library 2.0 mindset and Web 2.0 tools has taken library online communities in new directions and facilitated the development of new types of relationships. Adoption of well-known tools (for example blogs, chat, Flickr, YouTube, RSS feeds, social bookmarking, and social networks) is widespread and indicates many libraries have been quick to embrace the attitude of Library 2.0 and wish to promote interaction with their online communities. A number of studies have investigated the overall degree of adoption of Web 2.0 tools in academic libraries. For example, in a study of New York State academic libraries, 42% had adopted at least one Web 2.0 tool (Xu et al. 2009) and in a study of 32 university libraries in Australia and New Zealandⁱⁱ, 68% adopted one or more Web 2.0 technology (Linh 2008). More recently, Tripathi (2009) used the application index developed by Linh to identify Web 2.0 tools used by 277 university libraries,ⁱⁱⁱ finding that in the international landscape, 76% of libraries have adopted some Web 2.0 tools.

Putting the technology in place, however, does not necessarily mean that an interactive online community will follow. La Trobe University Library (LTUL) has implemented a range of Web 2.0 tools (blog, podcasts, RSS feeds and online chat)

and is recognised for its high adoption of Web 2.0 technology.^{iv} Building a successful and interactive online community is not just about the tools. It is about how the tools are used and this requires a close examination of participation and conversation between libraries and users in the online environment. Library 2.0 principles demand open communication between librarians and patrons, and a break away from the traditional roles of librarians dispensing information and library users passively receiving it. This means replacing the old fashioned, authoritarian voice, which embodies the formality traditionally favoured by establishments like universities, with a style of communication modelled on conversation between friends or colleagues.

This paper will examine how LTUL has used Web 2.0 technologies and principles to reshape conversations and increase interactivity in our online community. In particular the paper will focus on blogs and discussion boards as representative examples of the potential and value of these tools in building successful online communities.

2. The LTUL Blog

2.1 Purpose of the LTUL Blog

'Every library has a different starting point. Every library has a different set of constraints it must operate within—most often financial and political. And every library has a slightly different mission. Crafting better and better services, giving customers more and more control over library offerings, and reaching a greater and greater proportion of the population—all while seeking to fulfil that mission—is the goal of Library 2.0.' (Casey 2005)

Blogs have many advantages in quickly moving library services in the direction of Library 2.0. In the Australasian landscape 32% of academic libraries utilise blogs and their obvious benefits make them the second most commonly used Web 2.0 tool (Linh 2009, p. 641-642). Similarly, in the UK, 31% of academic libraries have adopted blogs as a “credible way to reach their users” (Hopwood 2009, p.71). A high rate of utilisation of blogs has also been reported internationally, where 43% of academic libraries employed blogs (Tripathi 2009, p.4). LTUL launched its blog in July 2007. The aim in establishing the blog was to provide an alternative avenue for students and staff to converse and share information in an informal, more personal way.

LTUL's blog is embedded in the library's webpage and selected content is also posted on the University's Facebook site. It is used primarily to promote library news and services, as well as links to other sites of interest. The library's blog content is archived and searchable and users can easily browse information by tags or category. Some examples of posts, by category, include:

- Book reviews (instructional)
- Borrowing information
- Building renovation updates
- EndNote
- Information literacy

- Library news
- Library services
- New or trial resources
- Requests for library patron suggestions/opinions regarding services

Other academic libraries use blogs primarily to inform users of services and developments. In Linh's (2008) study, the most popular uses of library blogs were to communicate about library services (34%) and to post news and events (34%). In Tripathi's (2009) study, the top uses were to post information about new databases (39%) and for general information (28%). In both studies using library blogs for information literacy purposes was evident in 10% or less of the blogs. Other categories include providing research tips, book reviews and new book lists. A category that is important to the LTUL blog but not evident in other studies is requests for user suggestions and opinions regarding library services.

Linh's (2009) study also points out that while some libraries only have one blog, some have up to five. Many libraries branch out from a main 'general' blog and run smaller, subject-specific 'sub-blogs' (e.g. Endnote). The University of Canterbury, in New Zealand, for example, uses a sub-blog for its Economics Department, the 'Economics Library Blog'^v, as well as another one for internal staff communication. Canterbury's Economics Library Blog includes librarians' posts, contents alerts, book alerts, teaching and research support and economics news. It was initiated to address academic staff requests to change how the contents pages of current journals were distributed. By updating their blog with this information on a regular basis, everyone in Canterbury's Economics Department is able to have simultaneous access to the latest journal content. Canterbury Library staff report that feedback indicates their sub-blogs have been a success (McIntyre 2008).

Another example that demonstrates the role of subject specific blogs comes from Georgia State University (Vogel 2005). Georgia State University Library in the United States runs a series of subject-specific blogs that can be accessed from the library-wide news page. These blogs are independently maintained by smaller groups of librarians. Some examples of the types of posts published on the blogs are listed below by category:

- library news: e.g. daily updates on the science collection's move from one library building to the other;
- announcements about SFX;
- alerts when library resources will be temporarily unavailable;
- books: notices when new reference works are available;
- recent monograph acquisitions for popular subjects;
- databases: announcements, updates, etc.;
- instructional: subject guides, drop-in sessions, etc.;
- new electronic journals;
- In the News: articles on topics of interest, including textbook pricing;
- open access publishing, Nobel Prize winners;
- faculty: periodic listings of new articles authored or co-authored;
- reminders to faculty about placing materials on reserve and requesting library instruction sessions for classes and lab groups.

2.2 LTUL blog visits

In a time when more students study off-campus, enquiries at service points in the library are on the decline^{vi} and use of online resources is constantly increasing, it is reasonable to consider the scope and focus of services for the online community. The frequency of visits to a blog is a starting point for analysing not only activity levels, but also the value of a blog and what it offers to the library's online community.

Since its introduction the LTUL blog has been actively visited (see Table 1). The increasing average number of unique visitors demonstrates that the blog has a wide reach. Activity level indicates that the blog is no longer a supplementary online service but is used regularly and daily.

Table 1

Date	Page views	Unique visitors	Average page views per visitor	Average visitors per day
September 2007	686	130	5.2	4
October	4,987	1,309	3.8	42
November	4,446	1,515	2.9	50
December	7,318	1,507	4.8	48
January 2008	8,074	1,158	6.9	37
February	10,482	2,125	4.9	76
March	17,154	3,316	5.1	107
April	22,153	3,722	5.9	124
May	24,772	4,085	6.1	132
June	26,560	4,596	5.7	153
July	19,416	3,839	5.0	124
August	13,728	3,234	4.2	104
September	18,321	5,022	3.6	167
October	18,842	4,623	4.1	149
November	16,081	3,272	4.9	109
December	18,632	2,523	7.3	81
January 2009	19,775	3,975	4.9	128
February	57,981	6,565	8.8	234
March	54,571	7,372	7.4	238
April	43,284	7,931	5.4	264
May	33,385	4,907	6.8	158
June	42,780	5,588	7.6	186
July	32,250	5,316	6.0	171
August	45,615	5,540	8.2	179

2.3 Maintaining the LTUL blog

To maintain and encourage a high level of visits to a blog it is essential to update content on a regular basis. Advocates of library blogs recognise that although blogging software is free and simple to use, the importance and time required to

provide quality content on a regular basis must be taken into consideration when developing a blog (Schecker 2008, McIntyre 2008). No advantage will be gained if staff cannot commit to posting content consistently. Regular updating with pertinent and timely material is recognised as a critical factor to the success of a blog. One of the primary means of measuring the success of a blog is the continuity of postings. In Linh's study, only 14.9% of Australasian academic libraries published new posts within a two day period; with most blogs being updated typically once per week or even less frequently (Linh 2008, p. 649). The LTUL blog is updated at least 3 times per month, as the monthly post statistics indicate in Table 2. Updating the blog is part of the routine workflow of the Communications Team. Staff in the team have responsibility for coordinating content for posts and ensuring a regular and evenly-spaced schedule of posts is maintained each month.

Table 2

LTUL's Monthly blog post frequency	
Date	No. of posts
July 2007	3
August	11
September	8
October	5
November	6
December	4
January 2008	7
February	8
March	10
April	11
May	8
June	6
July	8
August	7
September	5
October	10
November	6
December	9
January 2009	No posts
February	3
March	9
April	5
May	11
June	6
July	5
August	7
September	15
October	13

In Hopwood's study of UK academic libraries, the overall average posting rate was 8.8 posts per month (Hopwood 2008, p. 53). Similarly, Crawford (2009) reported that of 212 U.S. academic library blogs surveyed in 2007 there was an average of 9 posts per blog per month. However, this figure dropped to 6 posts per blog per month when the survey was repeated in May 2009. In contrast, as shown in Table 3, LTUL's average post rate has increased from 6 posts per month since the blog's launch in 2007, to over 9 posts per month in 2009:

Table 3

Year	Average monthly post rate
2007	6.1
2008	7.9
2009	9.3

Crawford (2009) analyses both average monthly and weekly post rates. He describes a healthy blog as being either robust or active. A robust blog averages at least one post per week; and an active blog, at least one post every two weeks. In his 2007 study (Crawford 2009), 84% of blogs surveyed matched the criteria for a healthy blog (60% robust, 24% active), while in 2009 this had dropped to 60% (42% robust, 18% active).

2.4 Participation and interaction

One of the biggest motivators for library staff to regularly publish blog content is when their posts generate comments and information exchange. Discovering the type of posts that generate user participation helps to achieve more interaction on the blog. LTUL's experience indicates that posts requesting feedback, suggestions, or opinion invite the most user response. For example, an analysis of type of post and number of comments shows that out of 183 news-related posts, a total of 40 comments were received; while 112 comments were received from just 23 opinion/multimedia type posts (see Table 4).

Table 4

Month/Yr	Post category		Comments by category	
	Opinion/ Multimedia posts	News posts	Opinion/ Multimedia comments	News comments
July 07		3		3
August		11		1
September		8		2
October		5		
November		6		
December		4		
January 08		7		
February		8		2
March		10		
April	1	10	3	
May		8		2
June		6		
July		8		
August	1	6	2	
September	3	2	27	4
October	4	6	16	
November		6		8
December	1	8	2	
January 09	<i>No posts during this time period</i>			
February		3		
March	2	8	1	
April	2	8	1	
May	1	10	33	8
June	1	5		2
July		5		2
August		7		
September	5	10	12	3

A recent example of a post that resulted in excellent user participation and interaction was related to library hours at one of the regional campus libraries. The first post on this topic informed students of new extended opening hours on Sundays. This resulted in a lively discussion and a number of students left comments that longer hours were needed on Saturdays instead. The next post on the topic asked students to vote on weekend hours. Seventy-five people voted and an additional 13 comments were left on the post. Judging by this and similar exchanges, it is obvious that library users are keen to participate in decisions that impact on their services and they appreciate being listened to. This type of interaction also gives library clientele a say in their library experience.

2.5 Conversational intensity

'Blog it and they will respond?' This was never a reasonable assumption for library blogs and it hasn't worked out very well in practice.' (Crawford 2009)

Conversational intensity has been defined by the overall number of comments and average number of comments per post (Crawford 2009). Some studies of academic library blogs express disappointment that a higher level of conversational intensity is not evident in blogs. Hopwood (2008) observed that, in general, on UK academic library blogs "the number of comments were low or non-existent" (p.77). Likewise, Crawford's (2009) analysis of academic libraries, reveals that despite the fact that a minority of blogs increased conversational intensity between 2007 and 2009; on average, in 2007, only 37% of blogs had comments and in 2009, 22% had comments. Furthermore, very few posts averaged even a single comment. If the original purpose of the blog is to post news rather than engage users by asking questions and eliciting feedback, it is not surprising the conversational intensity is low as a result.

If the aim of blog posts is to invite participation, the comments that result can evolve into ongoing dialogue between users. It is gratifying when users comment on blog posts, but when they continue the conversation to help each other, it demonstrates that an interactive online community has indeed been established. This type of engagement was demonstrated on the LTUL blog in May 2009, in response to a post about Factiva (Appendix A).

In 2008, LTUL received a number of complaints regarding non-scholarly use of computer workstations and terminals. In response to these complaints a blog post was published advising students that steps were being taken to remedy the situation (Appendix B). Students' comments on this blog post were negative and critical of the library's approach to the problem. However, by publishing these comments LTUL demonstrated its willingness to participate in the dialogue with good faith and transparency.

Although it is sometimes not possible to solve a particular issue, by publishing and responding to student feedback, the library can demonstrate it is listening and is genuinely interested in being part of the dialogue by acknowledging user comments and contributions. The key to having a new voice in library online communities is to allow patrons make both positive and negative comments. This is where the concept of 'radical trust' comes into play.

'...We can only build emergent systems if we have radical trust. With an emergent system, we build something without setting it in stone what it will be or trying to control all that it will be. We allow and encourage participants to shape and sculpt and be co-creators of the system...Radical trust is about trusting the community.' (Fichter, 2006)

Schwier (2009) also considers trust to be the most important single prerequisite for enabling vibrant online communities. It is central to the attitudes inherent in Library 2.0 and is an important factor when encouraging participation in emergent systems like the library's blog.

2.6 Success of the LTUL blog in building an online community

The advantages of blogging should not be underestimated and LTUL has continued to improve the navigation and design of its blog. In July 2009, the original blog (Figure 1) was re-launched (Figure 2). The new blog's appearance and functionality has been improved and more effort is being made to include multimedia posts rather than text-based posts.

Figure 1 – Early blog launched in 2007:



Figure 2 – New look blog relaunched in 2009:



Various metrics can be used to assess the value of a blog to the online community, but ultimately success is dependent on why the blog was initiated in the first place. Was it to reach more users who would not otherwise be engaged? Or was its aim merely to impart information? These questions provide a starting point to measure success. The main intention when establishing the LTUL blog was to impart information to a wider audience. Usage statistics demonstrate this aim has been achieved. Analysis of posts and comments also demonstrates that the blog has successfully increased client interaction and strengthened the library's online community. The Library Discussion Board in La Trobe's Learning Management System (LMS) is another example of how the library is interacting with students and expanding its reach in the Web 2.0 environment.

3. Library Management System (LMS)

3.1 Purpose of the library discussion thread in LMS

While LTUL's blog conversations strengthen its online community at large, its participation in LMS (WebCT) discussion threads adds another dimension, albeit within the boundaries of the selected units in the LMS.

If Library 2.0 means taking services to where users are, in the academic environment the institutional portal (or LMS) is where students spend much of their time (Miller 2006 p.3). Whereas blog conversations require users to visit the library's online space, by participating in LMS discussions the library is able to go to the students and be part of their online workflows. In these instances, discussion of library research matters does not interrupt the task at hand, but becomes part of the process, and librarians participate in conversations where patrons are treated as peers. Participating in LMS discussion boards increases the opportunity to engage and inspire students intentionally and collectively in relation to library research.

3.2 LMS discussion threads

Analysis of the library discussion threads from an LTU Health Sciences unit, in 2009, reveals that participation in these conversations is a key contributor to promoting a sense of community and cooperation amongst users relating to library matters.

Over a three-month period (19/8/09-3/11/09), there were 81 discussion threads posted on a library discussion board in one LMS first year unit, and there was a total of 169 posts across all threads. It is interesting to note that the discussion threads initiated by the library did not result in further discussion or response from students (see Table 5). In contrast, almost all the discussion threads initiated by students, elicited a response or started a discussion between more than two people. The success of these conversations requires active and enthusiastic participation from the librarians involved, because while students may not respond to library threads, library staff must be active in participating in student threads.

Table 5

Group initiating discussion thread	Number of threads	Threads with discussion
Library staff	30	0
Academic staff	1	0
Students	50	50

Out of the 81 threads on the discussion board, the category with the highest number of threads was “Library notices” posted by library staff (see Table 6). However this category also had the lowest ratio of posts per thread; that is, in all cases the only post in the thread was the original notice posted by library staff. The other six categories of threads were mostly student-initiated. These discussion threads included a range of topics, with traditional-style reference queries being the most frequent.

Table 6

	Number of threads by category	Number of posts per category	% of total posts
Categories:			
Library notices	22	22	13%
Reference/research queries	16	37	21%
Turnitin	14	38	24%
Citation style	12	32	19%
Locating journals	11	23	14%
Essay format	4	11	6%
Using/navigating LMS	2	6	3%
	81	169	100%

3.3 Conversational intensity

Given the ratio of posts per discussion thread, conversations in the LMS could be considered to have more depth and intensity than those in the library blog. This higher level of engagement can be attributed to the fact that there are clearer boundaries around this subset in the library online community. The fact that all students are in the same unit of study means there is an explicit shared purpose. There is also a clearer focus and identity based on their shared experiences of the unit. Students quickly respond to each other when questions are posted in the library discussion space. In all of the student-initiated thread discussions there are examples of students helping each other and sharing their knowledge and skills about discovering library resources (see Table 7). Sometimes students are able to answer a question before a librarian is able to join the conversation. This means that the librarian’s role is to verify or supplement the information or response already given. In 15 of the 81 threads there were conversations that involved more than one student and a librarian. In these conversations the librarian is treated as a peer ‘delivering information in a decentralised manner where the conversations of users are taking place.’ (Lankes et. al. 2007, p.29)

Table 7

Students helping each other		
Thread category	Number of threads	Number of posts
Turnitin	6	30
Reference/research queries	3	12
Citation style	2	6
Essay format	2	6
Locating journals	1	4
Using/navigating LMS	1	3
	15	61

3.4 Success of LMS discussion in building the library online community

Although 50 student-initiated discussion threads (see Table 5) from a cohort of 1550 students may seem like a low activity rate over three months, it is interesting to note that in a different five-month period in 2009, the same cohort initiated 607 questions at the Research Help and Information Desks in the library. These time periods, both in 2009, are not directly comparable but nevertheless provide insight into the value of the librarian involvement in LMS discussion threads. Clearly, the LMS discussion thread has given students who would not have asked a question in the library the opportunity to have their queries answered. It has also given other students the opportunity to see what is being asked and participate in the conversation or simply learn from the questions and answers being posted.

4. Conclusion

For LTUL, the library discussion board in the LMS and the library blog are part of the 'matrix of dialogues' (Maness 2006) that make up the library's online community. These examples provide a lens through which we can examine the conversations that are taking place in the library's online community. Web 2.0 technology is changing the role and form of online conversations. For many of these dialogues, a new voice has emerged that matches the Web 2.0 attitude and contributes to building the library's online community.

In strengthening their online communities, academic libraries have embraced Web 2.0 tools and Library 2.0 philosophy to enhance connections with users in the online landscape. It is clear that for the academic library, Web 2.0 is about making the library user-centred, encouraging user participation, reaching out to users in new ways, creating community, and shifting services to where users are.

End Notes

ⁱ The term “Library 2.0” was first coined by Michael Casey in September 2005 in “Librarians Without Borders” Library Crunch, http://www.librarycrunch.com/2005/09/librarians_without_borders.html. September 26, 2005.

ⁱⁱ Academic Libraries in the study included: 26 in Australia, 6 in New Zealand

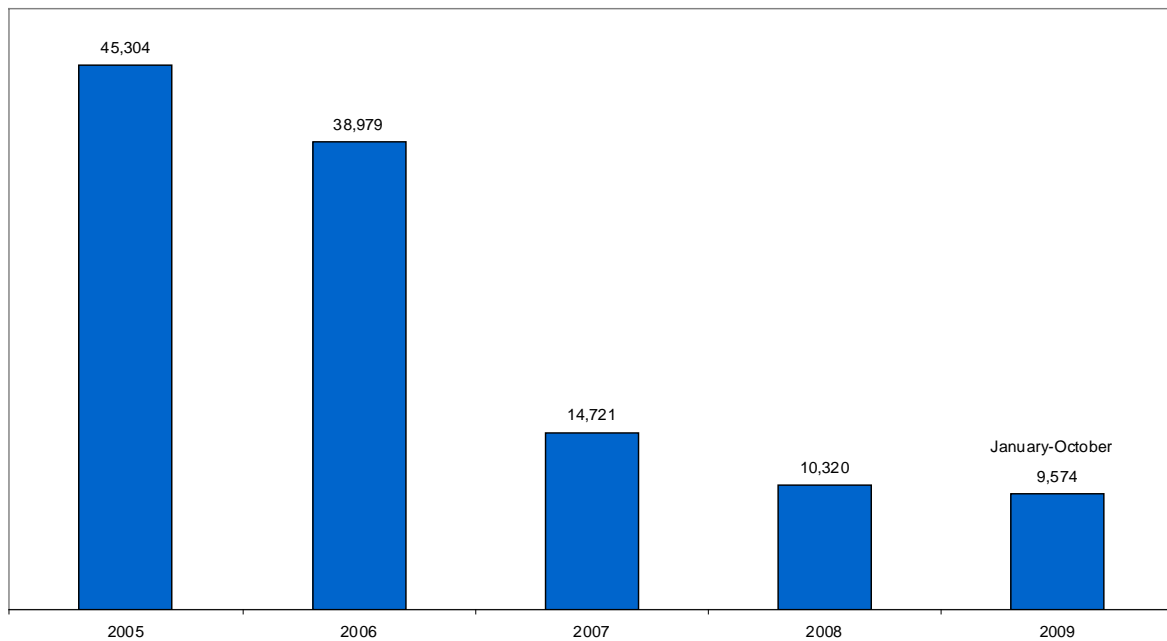
ⁱⁱⁱ Academic Libraries in the study included: 82 in UK, 151 in USA, 37 in Canada, 7 in Australia

^{iv} In 2007, LTUL ranked 2nd in Nguyen Cuong Linh’s list of most progressive users of Web 2.0 platforms among 32 Australasian University libraries.

^v <http://blogs.libr.canterbury.ac.nz/econ.php>

vi

LTUL Yearly Desk Queries - 2005-2009



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Appendix A

Looking for a newspaper article?

by /  May, 2009

Factiva (available from the alphabetical list of databases that can be accessed via the Library) lets you find articles published in any Australian newspaper and a huge selection of international papers, from The Washington Post to the Times of India.



By default Factiva searches across all the Australia metropolitan daily papers, in the last 3 months. You can change the date to search all issues in the database, usually from the early 1990s, and select individual papers such as The Age or The Australian. To search the news from other countries use the drop down menu to select "Publications by Region".

Factiva has many other search features including language options, searching by author, headline, or headline and lead paragraph to refine your searches.

Hint: use **and** between your search terms (e.g. burma **and** cyclone **and** international aid). For more help just ask at the Research Help Desk.

 6 comments

Grace

Like/Dislike:  0  0

16/05/2009 at 6:07pm,

Has anyone tried to use Factiva? It seems to be really complicated! I may have to go to the library information booth to ask how to use it! Why is it so complicated?

melissa

Like/Dislike:  0  0

18/05/2009 at 3:23pm,

it's pretty easy
just select the dates and the collection of newspapers then type
your search words
i think it's great usually these article cost about \$3

Grace

Like/Dislike:  0  0

20/05/2009 at 9:27am,

Thanks Melissa. Do we still have to pay \$3 if we use the La Trobe catalogue? My uninteresting question got 68 views or something! Shouldn't all those people be busy working on essays or something at this time of the year? instead of browsing library blog sites without even intending to write anything? Hello everyone! I got my question answered thanks.:)

Dennis

Like/Dislike:  0  1

25/05/2009 at 4:26pm,

There is a very useful guide to Factiva available here:
<http://latrobe.libguides.com/newspapers>

Lisa

Like/Dislike:  0  0

25/05/2009 at 5:55pm,

Did you know that the Library Staff are there to teach you how to use Factiva. That is their job, and they are pretty friendly and willing to help.

Lin

Like/Dislike:  0  0

05/06/2009 at 5:46pm,

If you use the databases through the library, there is no charge.

Appendix B

Bundoora: Improvement to computer access...

by [REDACTED] | September, 2008

Many students have complained about long queues at the express computer terminals due to people spending long periods of time using Facebook and other social non-academic sites.



To help address this problem restrictions have now been placed on 8 of the express computers (stand-up computers) nearest the Library's front entrance. These computers are **restricted to the La Trobe University network**.

Please leave a comment if you notice an improvement (or otherwise) in waiting time.

14 comments

Liz

Like/Dislike:  0  0

26/09/2008 at 3:07pm,

Finally the problem has been addressed. Thanks so much. Also, I believe this restriction should be applied to all express workstations in the library or sites like Facebook should be totally banned and filtered out so that express workstations have some sort of access to sites outside the university but NOT Facebook and other "social non-academic" sites. I say this because the computers upstairs that are meant to be used for catalogue search are used for accessing these sort of sites. I would greatly appreciate it if this problem was addressed and the restriction extended to stand-up computers.

Beverley

Like/Dislike:  0  0

28/09/2008 at 1:01pm,

Restricting any PCs to La Trobe sites is an over reaction. When an article I need is not available at La Trobe I use the express PCs to check the [REDACTED] library catalogues and bookshops to see if I can immediately borrow or buy what I want from an alternative source. Try removing access to facebook, myspace, sports and foreign language sites on the express PCs to shorten the queues. It is annoying to wait while inconsiderate students browse such sites endlessly. Control the offenders by increasing staff supervision of these areas, install timing-out software or find another solution, but don't narrow our 'express' online research focus to just one university website. This is already a problem with the PCs at [REDACTED]. Please don't repeat the mistake in the library.

[REDACTED]

Like/Dislike:  0  0

28/09/2008 at 2:08pm,

Thanks for the new arrangement. It does create reduction in waiting time. I do hope that such measure is expanded to computers at workstations. It is quite unfair for some students who need to do academic work on computers waiting while some other students are simply browsing news in their local language, face book, etc all but non-academic work.
Thanks

Mary

Like/Dislike:  0  0

28/09/2008 at 3:08pm,

I think that if people want to access external sources for research should then rely on non express computers – after all that is what they are there for. Only 8 pc are blocked, I do not think it goes far enough. I have seen some people using facebook in the reserve section. I don't think it is effective that staff are made to walk around monitoring computer use. The

fact remains that we are in university and people should be mature and considerate enough to know what library computers should be used for.

Student

Like/Dislike:  1  0

29/09/2008 at 4:09pm,

I wholeheartedly agree with those who are frustrated at abuse of pc use in the library. It is ridiculous that people watch films, tv series etc. while others queue. Another alarming trend seems to be the use of pcs by children. On three occasions in the last two weeks I have watched as a parent brings in a troupe of kids and logs them onto a pc in the AV area, where they happily play games etc. as Mum or Dad does some work or disappears with friends. The last time this happened, I watched as a queue built up, and finally told the first person in the queue that perhaps they would like to suggest to the child on x pc that they stop using it. This resulted in an angry attack from the parent. Why aren't staff controlling things like this? Furthermore, last week in the AV area, a staff member announced that anyone who wasn't using the AV pcs for AV work should leave and find a pc elsewhere. This resulted in all the timewasters watching movies and u tube sit! ting on a pc for even longer, and other people who were actually doing academic work (on AV computers as they were the only ones available)having to cease work.



Student A

Like/Dislike:  0  0

30/09/2008 at 3:10pm,

Check the  ' site and you will see what we are missing out on. e.g 24 hour access to computer labs and IT facilities.

Dean

Like/Dislike:  0  0

02/10/2008 at 10:10am,

I'm glad to see something is being done, but I wonder if it is the best possible solution. Limiting computers solely to the LTU network will inadvertently prevent students from gaining access to academic-related resources outside of the LTU network. I often need to track down references from news sources, government agencies and other organizations. Prevention of this is surely not what LaTrobe aims to achieve. Rather, we want to prevent people from using these computers for non-academic purposes. Therefore, attempts to block access to specific sites that are definitely not academic – such as facebook, myspace and youtube – if possible, might be a better targeted action. Moreover, because the problem of non-academic use of computers takes place on more than just 8 computers within the express section, such an action should be applied to all computers in the library.

"library reply"



Like/Dislike:  0  1

02/10/2008 at 1:11pm, Bundora

We can see from the range of blog comments that academic use of Library pcs is an important concern. The eight workstations have been restricted to the LTU network in response to student requests/complaints to have quick access to the library catalogue and database resources. The practice of restricting access on a small number of computers is common practice in many libraries to manage the overall use of computer facilities and to reduce queuing.

In some instances the use of social network sites, such as YouTube, is a legitimate academic requirement, therefore it is difficult to justify a blanket block on these sites.

The Library staff encourage patrons to notify staff at service desks if they become aware of others misusing computers for non academic purposes.

Angie

Like/Dislike:  1  1

07/10/2008 at 1:50pm,

I think the solution is okay, but not ideal... When I am at uni for 12 – 15 hours, I need to check email etc. and should have the chance to quickly check Facebook etc. without having to queue for a sit down computer, when I will legitimately only be 15 minutes.

The best solution is to require every user to sign in with the La Trobe ID and a 15 minute timer (or 1 hour depending on computer) starts...Once the time is up they are logged out. My local library uses this successfully. In off peak times, I can request to a staff member that time be extended, and they generally oblige by simply typing in a code.

In short — the long queues are a problem because of wait time – so fix the TIME on computers, not the CONTENT.

Dean

Like/Dislike:  1  0

10/10/2008 at 1:12pm,

THANK YOU! Finally I can access the LIBRARY CATALOGUE without having to wait. All the people complaining about not being able to get a computer – find a computer lab! We do have them you know. We also have 24hr computer labs. It supprises me people don't know this.

Katie

Like/Dislike:  0  0

10/09/2009 at 11:16pm, Bundoora

where are these computer labs? i've never been informed about them (and i'm a third year!!) maybe info about where the comp labs are should be displaced in the library around the computers so thse who need cmop access and not book access have an idea where to go?

"library reply"



Like/Dislike: 0 0

11/09/2009 at 9:21am, Bundoora

@Katie – they are the first row of the "Express Machines" (the stand-up computers facing the Agora, just behind the plasma screen) nearest the front entrance on Level 2, Bundoora.

Frustrated

Like/Dislike: 0 0

18/09/2009 at 11:42am, Bundoora

I think an equally, perhaps more, important problem is the absence of software updates on the computers in the library. If I want to use a computer with EndNote, a version of MS Word compatible with that I use at home, and a decent sized monitor I work in the study hall, if I want quiet I work in the library (after converting my work and inevitably losing reference details). Tough choice! If only the library computers could be updated with the latest Microsoft programs and with EndNote... Anyone listening?... Please!

"library reply"



Like/Dislike: 0 0

23/09/2009 at 12:42pm, Bundoora

Hi, and thanks for your post.

Library staff are aware of this issue and understand your frustration. It is now the practice to install EndNote on all new machines in the public area. I believe the newest machines are located in the area between the Inquiry Desk and the Research Help Desk, as well as the glassed-in study area on Level 2. Hopefully these computers are more compatible with your software. Thanks for your patience.