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Paper

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“The Information Literacy Odyssey,” Through Evolutionary Policies and Best Practices, Celebrates more than Ten Years of Partnership between Librarians and Engineering Educators

Engineering is a creative process, which involves a number of related capabilities, and engineers must respond to a range of technical, social, economical, political and environmental issues. Therefore, engineering students must acquire the skills, which pertain to their future careers and which, as professional engineers, they must continue to develop.

With the growing importance given to the empowerment of individuals, the idea of social and cultural development, and the notion of economic progress, mastering information in the 21st century has put information literacy, the effective information use concept, to scrutiny. In the higher education sector, many educators around the world have initiated programs to integrate information literacy in their curriculum in order to foster lifelong learning competencies.

This paper aims to bring international perspectives and reflections to a forum and illustrate how, at the Queensland University Of Technology, Australia (QUT), strategies and policies emphasise significant conceptual links between generic attributes, information competencies and lifelong learning. Various models are developed within all Faculties and Schools and interestingly in a variety of frameworks but it is within the Faculty of Built Environment and Engineering (BEE) that it all started.

BEE has a longstanding partnership with the Library regarding the planning, design and delivery of information retrieval skills programs and seminars to undergraduate and postgraduate students, academic staff and industry groups. It is within the School of Civil Engineering that the Library's AIRS course (Advanced Information Retrieval Skills) or IFN001 was first introduced to all BEE research students, and where fourth and final year students have been receiving a formal, integrated research component for more than ten years.

From the inception of the Degree course in Civil Engineering it has been a requirement for final year to undertake a full year thesis project. A major revision to the course was made in 1998 to convert it to a twelve credit format as required by the University. As part of the revision it was decided to split the sixteen credit point original yearlong project into two units of one semester each. The first unit, CEB411 Thesis A is compulsory and the second unit, CEB411 Thesis B an optional elective. With the concentration in thesis A on information gathering for the compilation of a literature review, to a greater extent than in the original year long unit and to assist the student with their work, the Liaison Librarian plays a greater role in their tuition.

This paper presents the investigation of the adequacy of the literature review process undertaken by these final year students in their unit CEB411 Thesis B including stakeholders and workloads.

It demonstrates how an initial and strong partnership has lead to respond to the good teaching, learning and research practices the school and the university have set. It created a precedent and for the last six years further partnerships have been forged between the faculty and the library to integrate sustainable development in the curriculum.