



Australian Library and
Information Association

10 ways libraries contribute to the university's competitive advantage

There are 42 Australian universities registered with the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA)¹, with more than 1.4 million local and international students enrolled². It is a requirement of TEQSA that a university provide a library service appropriate to the needs of its students, but researchers and academics also benefit extensively from the support of highly qualified and experienced library staff and access to professionally curated collections.

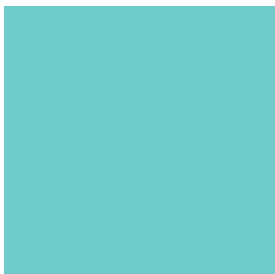
¹ <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/national-register>

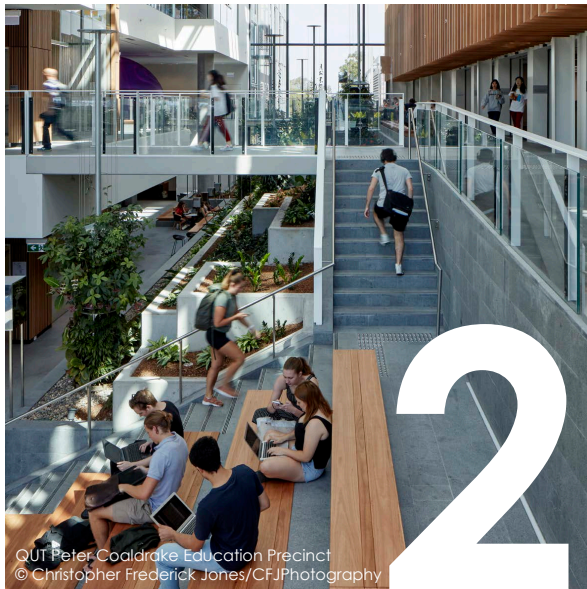
² <https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/stats-publications/>



CENTRAL POINT OF REFERENCE

Students, researchers and academics expect a quality learning institution to have a well-funded, well-resourced library, virtual and real world, staffed by qualified library and information professionals. The library is a welcoming and familiar hub of student activity on campus, providing the resources, space, technology, programs, services and expert help required as much by first years as by postgraduates. Online, it is a go-to destination both for resources and assistance. The library is an intrinsic part of the university's academic mission.





QUT Peter Coaldrake Education Precinct
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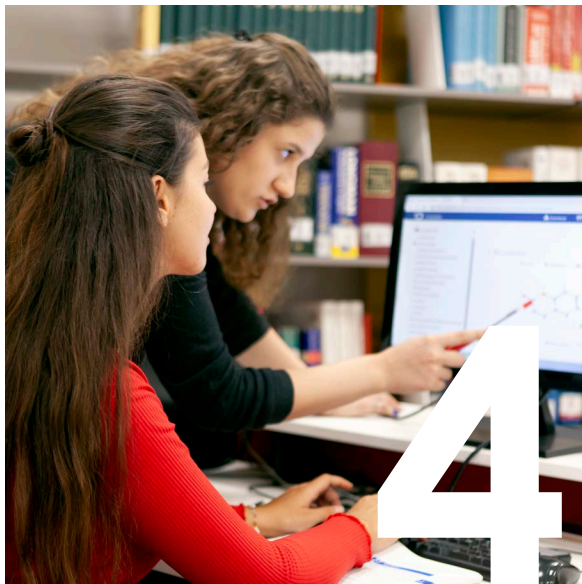
AWARD WINNING SPACES

Especially where space is at a premium at home and in shared accommodation, the physical library is a dedicated space valued by all for solo study and group work. Several new and refurbished university library buildings have featured in the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) Library Design Awards in recent years. They are a tangible symbol of an institution's investment in the future. Not content with collections being accessible online 24/7, some university libraries are experimenting with opening times for physical spaces going through to the early hours, recognising the different needs and behaviours of their users.

ACCESS TO THE WORLD'S KNOWLEDGE

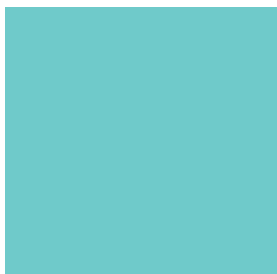
The library provides the reference materials students need, not only to complete their course work but also to explore their chosen discipline in greater depth. In university libraries, more than 95% of the collections budget is now spent on electronic resources³, giving faculty and students access to global sources of contemporary thinking, the latest scientific findings and the historical data which provides context for today's researchers – much of it instantly available online.

³ 2019 data <https://www.caul.edu.au/programs-projects/statistics-services>



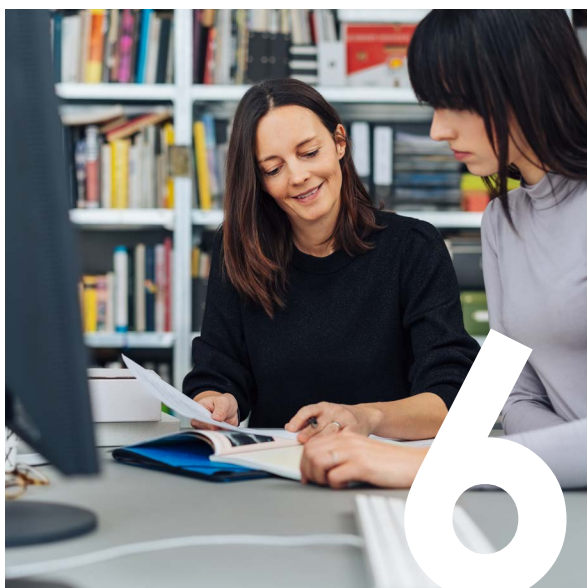
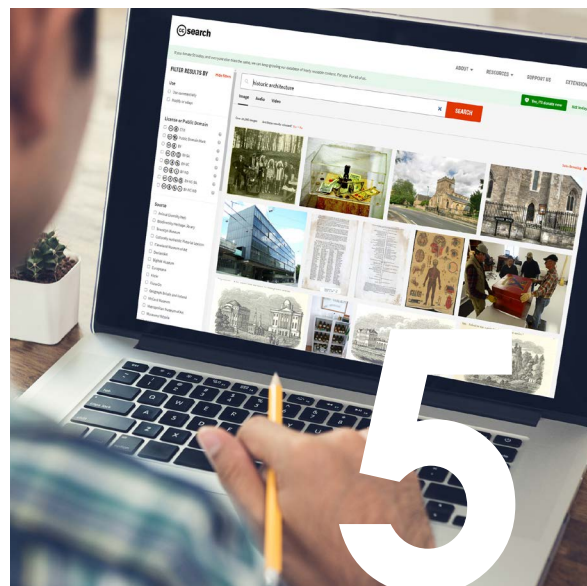
DIGITAL DEXTERITY

Library staff undertake regular and extensive professional development to remain on top of the latest information technologies and to learn how to apply these for the benefit of their users. University libraries also bring together teams to take these technologies to the next level by applying their knowledge, creativity and digital expertise, for example to new forms of data visualisation.



COPYRIGHT

Library staff are well versed in copyright legislation as it applies in Australia as well as to the opportunities provided by different frameworks initiated in other countries, including Creative Commons licences. ALIA and the Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL) are founder members of the Australian Libraries and Archives Copyright Coalition which has successfully lobbied for copyright law reform in Australia and continues to advocate for a regime which recognises and rewards the creators while advancing the sharing of knowledge in a digital age.



CONTRIBUTING TO RESEARCH CAPABILITY

Library staff are the invisible contributors to many research projects. Their names don't appear on the final report, but they may have helped with literature reviews, information analysis, text mining, data presentation, referencing and other behind-the-scenes tasks. Librarians are skilled at searching databases and other information channels that may not be immediately obvious to an early career researcher.

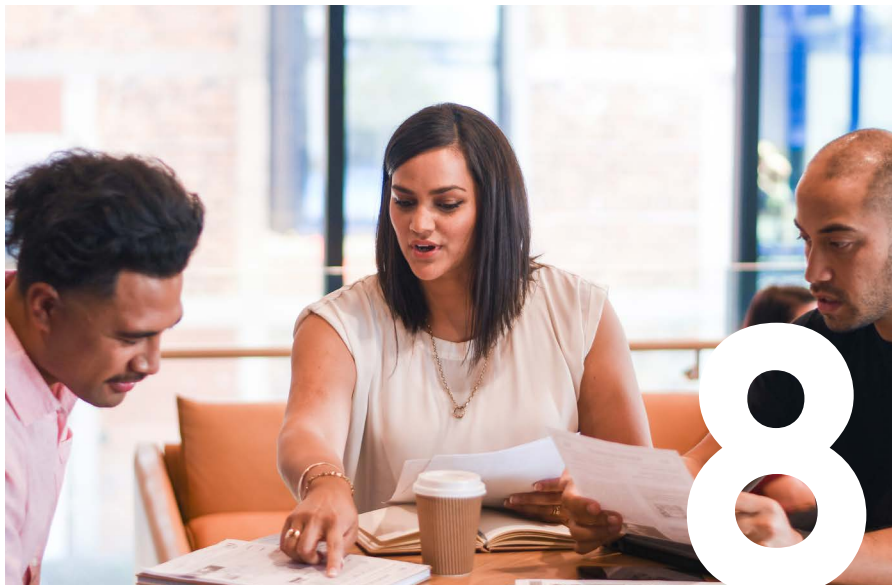
DISSEMINATING RESEARCH OUTPUTS

The library team generally has responsibility for a university's research repository, ensuring that this is not a static storage facility, but an active way of making research discoverable according to the FAIR principles of Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable. Library staff support researchers with guidance around the publication of data, preprints, open access models, avoiding predatory journals and with advice and recommendations about licensing.



OPEN ACCESS AND TRADITIONAL PUBLISHING

Finding a way through the minefield of green, gold and diamond open access, article processing charges, open-source software platforms, commercial publishers and aggregators can be challenging. Library staff are able to advise about the various open access and traditional publishing models. Where there is a university press (open access and for profit), there will generally be a close relationship with the library.



BUSINESS EFFICIENCY

CAUL members manage collections budgets for learning and research materials totalling approximately \$400 million per annum⁴. Library staff are skilled and experienced negotiators developing cost effective agreements with international suppliers. In addition, CAUL is negotiating highly innovative transformative agreements with major global publishers on behalf of all 39 Australian university members, which will bring together university research publishing expenditure and journal acquisition funds, providing improved value and greater transparency.

⁴ 2019 data <https://www.caul.edu.au/programs-projects/statistics-services>

RECRUITMENT, ENGAGEMENT AND RETENTION

In a highly competitive education market, attracting and retaining local and overseas students and postgraduates requires a combination of factors. A well-resourced library staffed by qualified professionals is one of these; a high ranking driven by research grants, outputs and impacts is another which is strongly influenced by the quality of the library. Studies in the UK, US and South Africa suggest that 'universities which succeed in engaging students to use library resources are rewarded with higher academic outcomes⁵.

⁵ <https://www.sconul.ac.uk/page/the-value-of-academic-libraries>

