Change management: redesigning, reskilling and redeploying

Rachael Bahl & Alma Lukic

Abstract

Restructuring, realignment, or 'simply' a business decision; any and all of these are cause for management to find they have staff in positions that are no longer necessary to the organisation.

What can managers and staff do to redesign jobs, reskill and redeploy staff to meet the changing needs of an organisation?

In 2013 Australian Catholic University (ACU) Library engaged a new library supplier who will deliver up to 50% e-content and shelf-ready print material. What will this mean for the ten library technician level positions that currently perform copy cataloguing and acquisitions work?

This paper will examine the change management process from the announcement of the change through to the implementation of the new supplier. The paper will present findings from team surveys and interviews conducted throughout the process.

Recommendations are given for staff facing similar changes in their own work environments.

Background

About ACU

Australian Catholic University (ACU) is one of the most distinctive Universities in Australia. Our university is a Catholic university, but as a publicly-funded university, we welcome staff and students of all beliefs and backgrounds. We offer face-to-face teaching at six campuses[1] across Australia (Brisbane, North Sydney, Strathfield, Canberra, Ballarat, and Melbourne), intensive teaching workshops in rural and regional settings, and online learning. In our 2012 annual report, our Vice-Chancellor wrote, "Not only is ACU the fastest growing university in Australia, it is now the largest Catholic university in the English-speaking world." (Australian Catholic University, 2012, p. 4).

Our student body is diverse and dispersed. Since 2008, student numbers have grown by 45% and staff numbers by 32% (Australian Catholic University, 2012, p.4). In 2012, student enrolments were 24,663 (Australian Catholic University, 2012, p. 7) with equivalent full-time numbers coming in at 18,047.3 (Australian Catholic University, 2012, p. 35).

ACU offers courses in a range of disciplines including theology, philosophy, education, nursing, health sciences, social work, and business. (Australian Catholic University, 2012, p. 6).

About ACU Library

ACU Library is arguably just as distinctive as our university. Library policies and practices are designed to serve the research, learning, and teaching needs of our clientele with a view towards equity of access regardless of study mode or location. We connect our clients with the information they need. We also facilitate connections between our resources, our collections and our staff.

The library sits within the portfolio of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students, Learning and Teaching).

We have one library on each of our campuses. These campus libraries form one "ACU Library". Each library was part of the respective predecessor colleges and institutions that joined to form ACU.

ACU Library has a print book collection of around 422,000 items, e-book collection of around 301,562 titles, and more than 178,365 print and ejournals (Australian Catholic University, 2012, p.27; CAUL, 2012). In 2012 we had 93.2 equivalent full-time staff which included 31.3 para-professional positions (CAUL, 2012).

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[1] At time of writing a seventh campus was due to be announced in Adelaide.

A comparison of ACU library with the libraries of The Australian National University and The University of Melbourne, shows the scale of our institution. While ACU Library has less than ten staff at some sites such as Canberra, nationally we are comparable in size and scope to the Australian National University.

Variable	Australian Catholic University	Australian National University	University of Melbourne
Expenditure (Budget) Total:	$13,633,398	$18,052,919	$47,760,218
E-books: Purchased & Subscribed titles	301,562	275,413	787,513
Expenditure: E-resources (2004 -)	$3,144,862	$6,326,000	$12,704,299
Libraries: Number	6	6	12
Loans: Total	269,823	256,133	1,095,078
Opening Hours (1996 -)	74.25	82.5	75.5
Population: Total FTE	19,247	18,301	45,014
Population: Total Persons	25,515	24,335	57,081
Positions: Total Staff	93.2	101.8	248
Students: Total EFTSU	17,887	14,368	38,243
Students: Total Persons	24,024	20,081	49,521
Turnstile Count (1996 -)	1,401,680	1,256,903	2,891,114

Source: CAUL statistics, 2012

Our unit: Resource Services
The Resource Services unit is one of several teams that offer a national service to all of ACU library. The unit was formed after a library-wide restructure in 2010. Resource Services had previously been located in each campus library, with local campus librarians and library technicians performing the full range of acquisitions and cataloguing work. In the 2010 restructure, these staff were incorporated into the new unit or redeployed to other teams. Resource Services was consolidated to three locations: Melbourne, North Sydney and Strathfield.

The new Resource Services team comprised a Manager, two senior librarians, two librarians, one senior library technician and ten library technicians (though some of these positions were fractional).

In 2010, the largest single group of staff and the team Manager were located in Melbourne so much of the Resource Services work was focussed there.

The team manages the expenditure of a library acquisitions budget of around $4 million dollars (CAUL, 2012). Last year, the team ordered and catalogued 18,757 print items. (CAUL, 2012), and a myriad of e-resources.

Resource Services Review 2012

In 2012 ACU library commissioned a review of our Resource Services and collection development work.

ACU Library commissioned Oranjarra Partners (http://www.oranjarra.com/) to conduct the Review.

The Project Scope and Terms of Reference (Oranjarra personal communication December 2, 2011) were:

> The Australian Catholic University libraries wish to improve their collection development practices and strategies by undertaking a collection development project that will identify best practice outcomes congruent with the aims and goals of the libraries and of the wider university community. To that end, the project will evaluate current practices in technical services, cataloguing, vendor relations and other relevant areas.

The review was comprehensive. Staff involved in collection development and in Resource Services were interviewed and surveyed for the Review.

On 17 March 2012, Oranjarra produced the "Collection Development & Resource Services Project and Consultation Report". (CD & RS Report).

The Report had a range of recommendations all of which impact on the Resource Services team to some extent. However, the major impact is caused by the following recommendations:

- Conduct a Supplier Review (RFP-RFI-Tender-Bid)
- Consolidate Resource Services Functions at Melbourne
- Outsource Basic Cataloguing and Shelf-Ready Services

The Report noted that it had been nearly four years since the ACU Library conducted its previous library supplier review in 2008 and that the Australian market had changed significantly since then. This was a very timely opportunity to look at how we were doing things.

With regard to consolidating in Melbourne, the Report recommended that the ACU Library "… finish the job begun in the restructure of 2010 by consolidating most Resource Services Functions at the Melbourne facility". (Pugh, 2012). The Review Report noted that all physical items go to Melbourne first, so it makes sense to consolidate there. Consolidation would also reinforce our "one library" service and remove the (unsubstantiated) impression that local technical services units might be re-instated.

The Report suggested that the receipt of shelf-ready material could result in cost and time-savings for ACU Library and that this might be investigated as part of the supplier review or as a stand-alone project.

ACU Library Response

ACU Library accepted most of the review recommendations either fully or in principle.

The library would conduct a Supplier Review (RFP-RFI-Tender-Bid) and following on from that consider the practicalities of consolidating Resource Services functions at Melbourne. Outsourcing basic cataloguing and shelf ready services was supported in principle particularly as we could see the benefits in re-deploying staff to meet the needs arising from the rapid growth in student numbers and the evolving need of the University, particularly in the research area.

The recommendations were discussed with Resource Services staff at their team meeting on 7 August 2012.

Jobs under 'threat'!

Understandably, many staff felt that their jobs were under threat. Clearly copy cataloguers would no longer be needed if basic cataloguing was outsourced. Staff in Sydney were concerned that their positions would disappear should Resource Services functions be consolidated in Melbourne.

This perception persists.

In a survey conducted for this paper we asked "have you been worried about keeping your job?" We received six responses to the survey. In response to this particular question, ("have you been worried about keeping your job?") three people indicated "yes, sometimes", two people indicated "yes, all the time". Only one person selected "no, never" as their response.

This is very revealing as jobs have never been under threat. Staff were assured from the very beginning that no redundancies were planned and that Library Management wanted to reskill and redeploy staff.

Hence the title of this paper.

Implementation of Recommendations
Supplier Review/Tender & Supplier Implementation

It was decided that ACU Library would prepare a Request for Tender (RFT) for a new library supplier. The Manager, Resource Services would be seconded to a project management role and oversee the tender for a new Supplier. Oranjarra Partners were contracted to assist with the Supplier Tender.

Rachael Bahl was appointed to the role of Manager, Resource Services in an acting capacity.

The RFT was issued in December 2012 for the "Supply of Print and Digital Monographs and Ancillary Services to ACU Library". A number of vendors were invited to respond. Following a rigorous selection process, the successful vendor was announced on April 10, 2013. Our new supplier is Ingram Coutts. (Australian Catholic University Library, 2013)

With the new supplier announced, the next phase of the project began. Rachael Bahl would oversee the implementation of the new supplier and the previous Manager continued to work on strategic projects. A Supplier Steering Committee was established and a Supplier Implementation Team formed to deal with the practical issues of the implementation.

It was confirmed that the roles of staff in the Resource Services team would change. Some staff, such as the copy cataloguers, would be more greatly affected than others. It would take some time to determine the exact impact of the changes.

Communication

We recognise how important communication is to a change management scenario.

The main method of communication with staff has been via email and team meetings. Team meetings are held monthly by videoconference. Rachael has also met with staff face to face on many occasions to discuss the impact of the new supplier.

In the survey conducted for this paper, respondents were asked "How do you rate the communication about the supplier implementation project and its impact on your job role?" One person said "Really good", four people said "OK" and two people said "Don't know".

These are reasonable responses, but as our communication has been regular and detailed, we hoped for better.

While the issues arising from the implementation have been regularly discussed in our team meetings, perhaps we may have benefited from a 'standing item' to discuss the implementation. This would have served to focus the discussion on the vision rather than 'just' dealing with the day-to-day things.

We recommend keeping your vision for change central in staff communication.

Consultation

Not only do we recognize that consultation is essential to successful change management process, it's worth noting that consultation is a requirement of all Modern Workplace Awards and Enterprise Agreements.

In its Best Practice Guide *Consultation & cooperation in the workplace* the Fair Work Ombudsman notes:

> "All modern awards contain consultation provisions, and the Fair Work Act 2009 (FW Act) requires that consultation provisions are set out in all enterprise agreements. In addition, the FW Act requires employers to consult with employees in other situations, whether or not a modern award or enterprise agreement applies." (Fair Work Ombudsman, 2013, p.1).

Various forms of consultation with the staff have taken place. We have had one-to-one meetings between the staff and the supervisor. Feedback has been invited by email and in team meetings.

In the survey conducted for this paper, respondents were asked, "Do you think you have been consulted enough with regard to the future of your job role?" Two respondents chose yes, two respondents said no, and two respondents said maybe.

There seems to be a genuine feeling that the Team Manager has tried to consult as much as possible about the shape future roles will take. However, when asked, "How could consultation have been done differently?" we received three comments.

> "I think it has been difficult to consult with staff as the true impact of the new supplier hasn't been fully implemented yet."

"Not sure. I think it's difficult to know [how consultation could be done differently] but just maybe having a rough idea earlier could of [sic] eased the mind."

"I think it would be better if managers had a firmer idea of what they wanted and expected to happen after the implementation, as far as staff roles go. I know it is difficult /impossible to see into the future but changing significant library processes should be done with specific objectives in mind and therefore a more definite view of keeping/shedding staff and roles of retained staff."

These are all interesting comments and we are grateful for the team's willingness to share them.

The survey was deliberately anonymous. It's clear that staff have welcomed the opportunity to comment in this fashion. The comments reveal a different perspective about the consultation process. We would recommend taking the opportunity to survey staff in this manner, but be prepared for full and frank responses.

The survey elicited a range of comments and while the sample size was small the comments were all very interesting. We've put the comments together in a wordcloud. It's clear that "information" is the biggest concern for staff. "Lack" is also a major theme. We note also the role of the Manager is central here. It's worth noting that "opportunities" and "optimistic" also rate a mention.
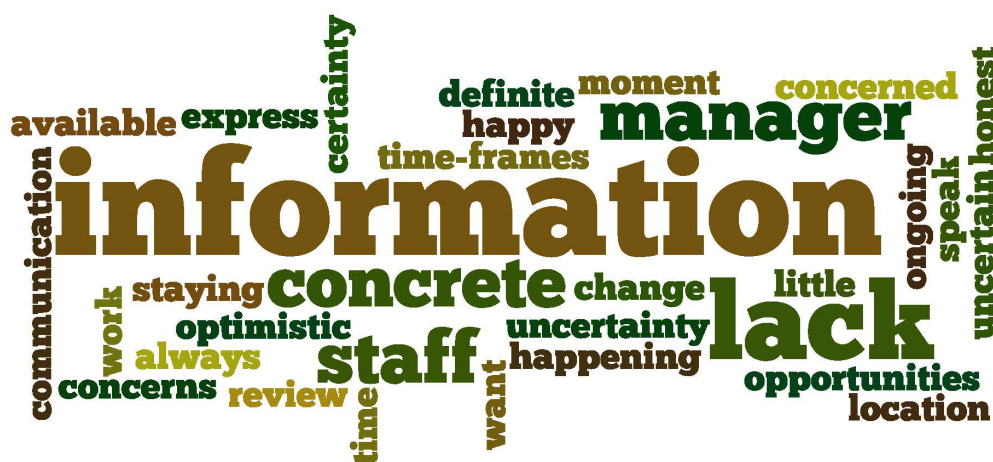
(Wordcloud produced from Survey Responses.)

Staff response to the Review and Supplier Implementation
Alma conducted interviews with staff and sought direct feedback about the process. This gave staff the opportunity to discuss their views fully without being concerned about what the manager might think.

Alma found that despite the consultative processes regarding outsourcing cataloguing and having shelf-ready items, staff unease and scepticism remains.

In particular, there are fears about the new direction, principally due to the time taken for our redefined roles to become clear.

This reorganisation has led to concerns that our work has not been appreciated and that this process could devalue our skills and diminish our professional skills, particularly in the area of cataloguing.

Fortunately, there have been no forced redundancies. Also staff were offered the possibility of redeployment which has been reassuring.

In addition to concerns about job futures, one of the main fears expressed was losing control over the collection (and maintenance) leading to a decline in the quality of resources and services.

While managing change can be challenging, many staff are still optimistic about embracing the opportunity to learn new skills and enrich their qualifications.

The challenge for all of us involved in change management is how to acknowledge staff concerns while not dwelling on them and how to best build on staff optimism.

Approach to re-skilling and re-deployment
Training is absolutely essential if staff are to be reskilled and redeployed.

We still don't know what roles Resource Services staff might be redeployed to, so this makes it difficult to put in place a training plan for individuals. We recognise that giving staff the opportunity to update their skills also builds their confidence in their abilities to perform different roles; we strongly encourage all staff to attend training sessions even if they do not necessarily appear relevant to their job responsibilities at present.

The statistics show that the team have embraced the opportunities on offer.
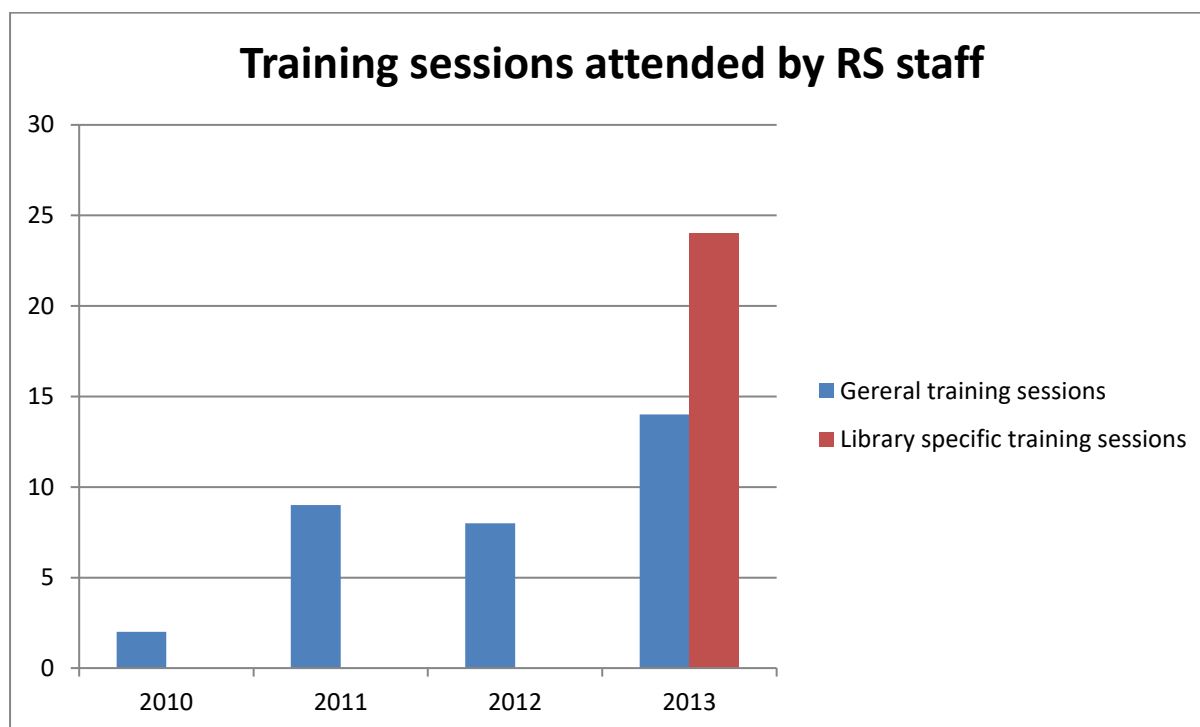
Source: ACU HR system
Note: 2013 first year internal library training counted in HR system, though unit records do not indicate attendance at similar training sessions in other years.

Tools, Resources, & "What can you do?"

Whether you are a "team member" or a "team leader/manager" you are not alone when you are faced by a situation that requires change management.

Your organisation will have a raft of policies and resources that deal with change. Check the policies at your institution.

At ACU we have:
- Change Management Guidelines
- Change Management Policy
- Redeployment, Redundancy and Voluntary Early Retirement Policy

The Change Management Guidelines outline both the responsibilities of Management and the responsibilities of Staff.

It's important to know your rights – and your responsibilities.

If you want to check your rights / obligations further (either as a Manager or as a Team Member) you can liaise with your Union or Professional Association.

Australian Unions (http://www.australianunions.org.au/ / 1300 4 UNION / 1300 486 466) will be able to tell you which union covers your work place if you are not already a member.

ALIA's website (http://www.alia.org.au/membership/become-alia-member) says "Use ALIA's Employment and Industrial Relations Advice Service and receive expert employment-related advice."

Remember that unions and professional associations are membership organisations. If you are not a paid up member you won't be able to access the full range of services.

Accept the help on offer. Nearly every organisation will have an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) in some form. At ACU the EAP enables us to access free, confidential counselling to discuss work or personal issues. Dealing with change is stressful and it's good to get whatever help you can to deal with that stress.

How are we doing & 'where to' from here?

These two questions are inter-related.

When we wrote the abstract for this paper in March 2013, we were sure that we would be telling you the method we'd used to redeploy staff to other positions within the library.

Unfortunately, as at October 2013, the implementation of our new supplier has not finished. ACU Library is a complex organisation and this complexity has proved challenging for the implementation. We've worked to streamline any remaining site-specific cataloguing practices in our campus libraries, so that there is consistency in the outsourced copy cataloguing.

Our previous supplier, DA Information Services went into voluntary receivership. We needed to put interim measures in place to enable orders to be placed and supplied without having the new supplier fully implemented. This caused delays in the implementation.

At this point in time, staff are still cataloguing, and we are yet to see the major changes that we expect the full implementation of the new supplier will bring.

How are we doing? We're doing well. We are working toward a new structure for our team and re-defining roles for staff.

However, it's clear from the feedback from staff in the survey that was conducted for this paper that we have opportunities to improve. We can look at how we might more effectively communicate a future vision to the staff and perhaps move the focus away from the more day-to-day aspects of the changes.

Where to from here? Our copy cataloguing will be outsourced by the end of the year. Most, if not all, the changes brought by the supplier implementation will be in place by then as well. We will almost certainly have at least four staff (currently copy cataloguers) who will have new roles. We will have two staff (currently acquisitions officers) who will have changed roles. We hope those roles are changing for the better with EDI invoicing lessening the workload. However, we still don't know how those positions will look moving into 2014.

Conclusion

We know is that restructuring managed poorly is hard. Restructuring managed well is harder. We hope that if you are dealing with change that it's being managed well.

At ACU Library, it's a case of 'watch this space'. It's been a long journey to this point and the implementation of our new supplier isn't finished. We don't yet know exactly what roles will be needed in our team as we move forward. We do know that our cataloguing and acquisitions roles are changing. It's an exciting time.

For you… whether you are a 'manager' or a 'worker', we hope you have a couple more tools in your toolbox to build your organisational knowledge and personal resilience in the face of change.

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