

Berwick Library – reflections on the past



Janette Burke, Director, Information Systems and lead Library and Learning Commons instigator!

The newly named and refurbished Library and Learning Commons opened on 10 May 2006 with Margot Hellyer ITS Client Director, Professor Phillip Steele, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Academic Director of Berwick Campus along with Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor Professor Steven Parker. The concept was the first of its kind offering combined ITS and Library services. This was the era that ‘Learning Commons’ was the new buzz word and attracted money for refurbishments. Monash South Africa and Malaysia were next.

Pauline Middleton, Manager

was acting Branch Manager in 2006 while Heather was on maternity leave. I remember my first day in January 2006 vividly as I walked into a library that was in the middle of being transformed into the Library and Learning Commons as described by Janette and Tony. It was, literally, in bits and pieces, and I wondered what I had got myself into but the wonderful staff there, Nick, Tony, Penny and Marcus, had everything operating smoothly in time for 1st semester.

It was an incredible year, lots of interesting opportunities such as working with Sahar and her IT team to work the “library *and* learning commons”, student roaming helpers, and liaising with new faculties. Everyone was welcoming and friendly and as can happen with small campuses, you could very quickly form effective working relationships with academic and other staff.

I never did quite get over doing the washing up in full view of our users but I loved the round window in my office, looking upon the grazing sheep and think myself lucky that I was driving home against the traffic!

Penny Presta, Subject Librarian

The best thing about Berwick was the people. I got to interact with staff in more functional areas, wear many hats and gain a better understanding of whole-of-campus operations. We had lots of wonderful personalities at Berwick, and there was an intangible sense of community amongst both staff and students.

Remember hobby horse races on Cup Day? Paul Sugden would bring his herd of hobby horses. One year Pauline Middleton's horse was a false start. This cleverly got her out of an embarrassing gallop around the courtyard. I wished I'd thought of it!

Tracey Whyte, Reference Librarian and Subject Librarian

I started working as the Reference Librarian at Berwick in 2003. Being a small campus with a 'can do' attitude meant it was a fun place to work and I learnt a lot from making do with what you have and what's possible even with limited resources. It also felt as though everyone knew everyone so if you didn't know something, you could always ask someone and collaboration was seamless. Students seem to get this too and would smile and say hello when you walked passed them on campus or in the street.

I'll remember:

- the cash register
 - classes without and with a training room
 - campus events including the Christmas lunch
 - Melbourne Cup day – actually Paul Sugden
 - the cows
 - Tom Chandler's orders
 - Kevin Rudd on campus in 2010
 - the clocks
 - the staff and students.
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Tony Lyons, Information Services Officer

Back in 2004, which seems like centuries ago now, I recall driving to Berwick from my home in South Oakleigh each day or catching the train from Huntingdale. Changes in the scenery were ever noticeable over those years. The little campus at Berwick was built on the original Casey airfield, of which there is now a small display depicting its history since being established by Colonel Rupert Ryan in 1938. (This was the first cross-country flight destination my father and I did in 1980 as part of flying training we did to pick up a flying instructor – how the scenery has changed since 1980!!). Never, ever did I think I'd be working at that spot 25 years later for Monash Uni!! The appreciation shown by the academic staff for the library and our services was truly gratifying, as was the rapport between us all.

The renovation of the library, into what was to become the 'Library and Learning Commons' in 2005-06 was a whole new approach to the way library services were to be conducted, as were the tasks undertaken by us, such as the commencement of 'Staff roving'. Eventually, the library became so busy. Following the departure of Phil Steele, and the IT Faculty, the campus took on a greater medical approach with part of the Nursing Faculty established by the Pro VC Leon

Piterman. The open spaces of the campus were soon after developed and the Nossal High School was completed in 2012 on the southern edge of the grounds. The Berwick Medical Centre was also completed at the north-eastern edge of the car park around this time as well. Over the years here, my position also developed into a supervisory role of the casual staff, and undertaking further duties relating to Lending Services, OH&S and the development of the print serials collection. There was also the obligatory discussion/chat with the academic staff from the Education Faculty regarding the integration of the teaching collection in the library which was truly a 'big thing'! The whole atmosphere was really like a big family!

Ruth Brown, Acting Manager

I was briefly in this role while the Manager, Heather Marshall was on leave. The library was established as an "electronic library"; the only books, being a small shelf of reference material. The collection consisted predominantly of digitized course reading guides and reading lists. This was at the time when the other branches held only printed copies on Reserve. There were three other staff, including Nick Hock.

Barbara Jacoby, Library Director

I enjoyed working with the Berwick staff and appreciated their sensible, 'just do it' attitude (always with limited resources), but the best people to relay the "story" and "life" of the Berwick Library are the staff who worked on-site, and especially Heather and Nick. They were instrumental in building and organising the original concept of the Library and transitioning it to its current configuration.

Heather Walker, Manager

I was the Library Manager at the Berwick Campus for 10 ½ years, 1996 – 2007. The Library started up as an e-Library – there were no books on site, just PCs, so it looked more like an IT lab than a Library. It was a very advanced idea at the time but a bit of a shock to students who were still attached to print. Students could access journal articles and book chapters via the e-reserve site, but that was still quite a foreign concept. They had borrowing rights at Chisholm Library across the road, so their requirements for print were met but they had a preference for books on-site. A print collection slowly developed over the years, but our e-resources grew as well, so there was a happy mix.

In the early days, everyone knew everybody and we were all involved to help develop the campus. It was friendly, fun and exciting.

It was an amazing opportunity for me to help develop the Library from the ground up.

Susan Shand, Learning Skills Adviser

Remember Jonathan? At least I think that's his name. The autistic boy who use to come to the office with a head full of weird information and tell us all about it. I always thought it was a tribute to the little campus and the caring library staff that he was able to thrive and be a successful student. I suspect that at the bigger campuses he would have been completely lost.

So that's my "thumbs up" to us.
