

How the Library contributed to the development of Monash

Marta Chiba, a former Library director and branch manager, continues her history of the Library

Monash University from its inception had a firm focus on its place among other universities, both nationally and internationally. Many developments reflected a determination to create its own specific brand: a large research oriented university that is international in its outlook, has a broad academic program, is engaged with other institutions and the private sector and attracts both local and international students. The Library has for many years consulted with clients, involved staff in discussions and arranged strategic planning retreats for its senior staff to ensure that the Library support the University's ideals and aspirations.

M.U.S.I.C – ahead of its time

The University was keen to collaborate with industry in teaching and research. A proposal for the creation of Monash University Scientific and Industrial Community (M.U.S.I.C) in 1970 was an early attempt to engage with industry for research and consultancy that would also include the library. The idea was ahead of its time and was not accepted by half of the faculties.

Fourteen years later the Government urged universities to attract part of their funding from the private sector. In response, in 1984 the Hargrave Library launched a fee-based information and referral service that included the library and the faculties, especially in science and engineering.

The Hargrave Information Technology Service (HITS) catered for the specialist information needs of industry, business and manufacturing. Charges for the service covered costs and a margin for profit. HITS proved to be a popular and relevant service. It was eventually taken over by MONINFO (now External Client Services), a library-wide information service.

Resource sharing organisations formed

All research libraries battled to meet the spiralling cost of maintaining access to current periodicals. Before the age of databases and electronic journals, formal resource sharing between libraries was the only viable solution to providing access to the vast range of information resources required by researchers.

Monash University Library offered and assumed leadership in a number of resource sharing projects including CMLLO, Central Medical Library



Library professional staff discuss the Monash2020 report at a staff retreat

Organization and SESTICON, the South Eastern Scientific and Technical Information Consortium (established 1987). Founding member libraries included a number of CSIRO libraries and special libraries such as the Australian Road Research library, SECV Herman Research Laboratory library and BHP Melbourne library. Resource sharing guaranteed reciprocal access to books and journals for clientele of member institutions and included access to member libraries online catalogues. Shared subject interests were identified. Formal cooperation also took place between other specialist library groups eg in law.

Asian Studies collection established

The University recognized the importance of Asian Studies relatively early. When the Interdisciplinary Centre of Southeast Asian Studies was established in 1964, the Library quickly offered support. Mrs Paulette (Bob) Muskens was appointed founding Southeast Asian Librarian in 1964. Bob Muskens was responsible for the early development of a research collection, including the acquisition of a world-class Dutch East Indies collection. Her successor, Mrs Helen Soemardjo continued the good work, in particular the Indonesian collection, which is the third largest in Australia.

In 1995 at the initiative of the then Associate University Librarian, Mrs Ho Chooi Hon, all the library's Asian language materials were brought together to form the Asian Studies Research Library. This one-stop shop for Asian studies enhanced services and assisted in the promotion of all Asia-related collections. In 2000, the Asian Studies Research Library team was presented the Vice Chancellor's Award for Exceptional Performance by General Staff. The Asian Studies Research Library is now known as the Asian Studies Research Collection.