

## **Progress report on actions taken at UniSA in response to the Whitmell report**

The Whitmell report on the UniSA Library: *Preparing for demographic change* was prepared in November 2004, a by-product of a larger study on workforce and succession planning in the Libraries of the Australian Technology Network.

The report recognised that UniSA was experiencing many of the same workforce and succession planning as the other ATN libraries including those associated with an ageing workforce and limited numbers of staff broadening their work experience. Issues identified as specifically of importance to UniSA included: difficulty in recruiting librarians to the Adelaide area, the considerable number of staff on employment contracts and the uncertain future for staff with an ongoing reorganisation and impending retirement of the Library Director.

### **Summary of changes since report**

- Closure of one metropolitan campus
- Completion of Library restructure at the end of 2004
- Appointment of new Library Director
- University wide staff attitude survey
- Revitalisation of performance management scheme
- Further restructure (managing change) underway
- Reduction in number of staff overall after each restructure
- Significant reduction in number of staff employed on contract
- Library now has responsibility for copyright, digitisation of course readers and research repository
- Recognition that the Library encourages further study and has a preference for employing graduates
- Increasing automation of transaction based activities – including 75% of loans using self-check machines

The Whitmell report for UniSA made seventeen recommendations reflecting those appearing in the report for the ATN libraries as a whole.

1. Expand and strengthen the staff plan into a written workforce and succession plan  
*The elements identified as essential are components of the 2004 and 2006 managing change documents, the Library's annual strategic plan and the performance management plans for individual staff. The most recent managing change was undertaken to ensure that technical expertise is developed, maintained and extended throughout the Library. All staff appointments since 2004 have been to a classification level rather than to a location. The 2006 managing change process makes it clear that staff will not be located at the same campus on a permanent basis.*

2. Conduct an inventory of skills, aptitudes, and attitudes  
*The need for increased technical proficiency, greater awareness of the changing environment of higher education and changes within the information and resource landscape is clearly apparent from workshops conducted in response to the results of a University-wide staff attitude survey, performance management discussions and interviews for vacant positions. There are no plans to conduct an inventory of skills, aptitudes and attitudes within the next 12 months.*

3. Involve staff in thinking about and preparing themselves for the future workforce  
*Part of Performance Management.*

4. Communicate the plan

*The direction taken by the Library is encapsulated in the managing change document. For 2006 there were submissions from 37 individual staff as well as 4 team (campus) submissions. Regular planning meetings are held between sections and supervisors.*

5. Demonstrate the benefits

*Part of 2006 managing change documentation. Includes clearer career paths and increased opportunity for changes in role.*

6. Measure the success

*The benefits of the 2004 managing change process were most clearly evidenced in improved job satisfaction for the Academic Library Service teams and reallocation of funding from salaries to purchase of resources. Discontent with other elements of the 2004 plan are being addressed in the current restructure*

*Staff identified with leadership and management potential were successful in their applications for new positions. The success of the mentoring scheme for professional librarians put in place during 2006 was similarly reflected in appointments to higher classification positions*

7. Ensure that selection and promotion criteria focus on learning agility, personal attributes and leadership qualities

*As part of managing change the majority of positions were either disestablished or significantly modified. New position descriptions were created and all new positions classified to the appropriate HEO level using the Mercer CED Job Evaluation System.*

8. Reduce hierarchies within the Library and its departments

*The very flat structure has been replaced through the creation of smaller teams with clear succession paths. The Library Information Technology Services and Information Resource Management areas have been combined to increase flexibility and provide for the creation of smaller teams that are focused on outcomes rather than functions. These smaller teams also provide increased opportunities to develop team leadership skills.*

9. Be willing to hire staff from public, special and college libraries. Be also willing to hire those without specific sets of skills or experience, but with potential

*This is the case*

10. Encourage staff to take a proactive stance in their own career development

*This occurs as part of individual staff work plans and performance management reviews. Study leave is available.*

11. Encourage staff to have short, medium and long-term action plans for development

*This occurs as part of individual staff work plans and performance management reviews and has been reinforced during workshops and interviews associated with the staff attitude survey and managing change*

12. Consider a professional literature club to discuss articles and reports from the library literature and how they can be used in the Library

*A number of staff regularly use email to bring interesting articles to the attention of their colleagues however this is a very unstructured and there has been no attempt to formalise or evaluate the impact of this*

13. Identify staff with leadership and management potential

*Staff with potential are identified by senior managers. Appointments to positions with higher duties are made to develop skills and knowledge and staff development opportunities identified .*

14. Create a work and career path development plan for those identified to ensure that they are able to build their skills and capabilities

*See above.*

15. Encourage developing mentor arrangements within networks

*The informal and ad hoc arrangements of earlier years were formalised in 2006 when HEO5 librarians were mentored by HEO7 staff in either Access & Enquiry Services or Academic Services.*

16. Get staff involved as much as possible with local library education programs

*Staff participate in activities organised between the 3 SA universities and State Library and are active in the new librarians and local ALIA groups .A wide range of inhouse training sessions is offered.*

17. Participate with LATN and other library associations to encourage a survey of the issues impacting on the Library workforce.

*This is being done through the LATN workforce planning group*

#### **Response to other observations and comments from Whitnell**

- The Library is participating in the Business Project Officer program. Graduates with excellent academic records in business, commerce, or management are offered fixed term contracts for two years as a Business Project Officer to rotate through four business units to achieve a broad business skill set. Six months is spent in each unit and salary costs are met by the unit
- There has been a minor change to the age profile of the Library with a number of staff accepting voluntary redundancies and some new appointees falling in the lower quartile for age. Position descriptions included requirement for familiarity with current technologies and services and this helped in appointment of younger candidates
- There has been a short-term improvement in attracting external applicants. In part this may be attributed to the large number of positions available, the use of non-targeted internet advertising and the slightly higher classification level for a number of professional positions. Positions at HEO4 level are no longer restricted to those holding a Library Technician qualification
- Creation of crossover positions between technical and public services. This was in direct response to comments from staff participating in the Whitnell planning workshop and supported by staff input at Library initiated story boarding activities
- Revised induction program that includes visits to each campus and discussions with each of the senior managers
- Broad-banding of classification levels recommended for UniSA is not part of the current Enterprise Agreement but there is now provision for “linked” classification for positions. Two position descriptions are required and there is no automatic progression to the higher classification