*Building a robot in the Curtin University Library Makerspace.
Image: Sam Proctor*

COLLABORATION:
THE KEY TO LIBRARY AND UNIVERSITY SUCCESS

University libraries are no longer self-contained entities that passively wait for users to come to them. PETER GREEN and SARA CULVERHOUSE report on how libraries are reaching out to the wider university community and making themselves indispensable.

There is increasing demand for library and information professionals to work more closely with the wider university community and at the same time to develop new skills in areas such as learning design, digital media production and data management. Curtin University Library in Perth has recently made a practice of fostering new and closer relationships with staff from across the university. These collaborations have resulted in innovative projects and enabled library staff to expand their traditional skill sets.

Library staff have worked, for example, with staff from University Ethics, and Ethics Equity and Social Justice, to support a program which aims to encourage high school students from low socio-economic backgrounds to pursue tertiary education. As part of the program, library staff have taught digital literacy skills through iPad games and challenges. This innovative approach was well received by students and recognised through the Library Board of WA Award for Excellence 2015.

Created in 2015, the Library's Makerspace is part of a collaborative effort to create a maker community at the university. Staff from the library and from a wide range of disciplines across the university, including engineering, art and education, work together using the library Makerspace to create practical, hands-on learning experiences, foster community-building and encourage experimentation. The Makerspace facilitates peer-to-peer learning between staff, students and members of the community. It provides

development pathways for library staff interested in coordinating a wide variety of activities and in learning new skills such as programming. The Makerspace has evolved to become a key aspect of the library's outreach program.

Library staff are also working closely with researchers to develop improved support for researchers. As an example, library staff have developed new skills in research data management, including working with research data, metadata schema creation, data management planning and data publishing. This collaborative approach ensures that the library continues to provide informed and effective services to the university while also allowing for the professional development of library staff.

This is an exciting time to be working in an academic library as there is increasing demand in the university environment for the skills and expertise that library staff bring. Although growing into new roles to meet the demands can be challenging, it allows library staff to reap the rewards of new collaborations.

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