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Wollongong: from bunker to beauty

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Wollongong: from bunker to beauty

Abstract

A transformation is taking place at the University of Wollongong Library. An extension to the building is adding 2,000 square metres of space across three floors and visually changing the façade from a heavy bunker to a light-filled, transparent space. As the extension project progresses, the impact on both the exterior and interior are increasingly evident. The pebblecrete slabs that were suspended over the top floor and appeared to press the brick walls into the ground have been removed. A number of small shrubs and trees obscuring the building have gone. A soaring portico roof now provides shade for the upper floors. The building itself is no longer nondescript; it now dominates its space at the heart of the campus.

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Wollongong: From Bunker to Beauty

A transformation is taking place at the University of Wollongong Library. An extension to the building is adding 2,000 square metres of space across three floors and visually changing the façade from a heavy bunker to a light-filled, transparent space.

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Before



...and after

From the inside, vistas to the campus and beyond open up. The former brick walls included slit windows more appropriate to a medieval fortress, making stack areas dark and reliant on overhead lighting. These have been replaced with glazed walls on the northern and eastern sides providing natural light for group and individual study spaces.

The entrance has been reoriented to the north, leading clients into the building from a paved meeting area where a number of major pathways converge.

A coffee shop within the building will enliven this communal space. Overall, the extension will allow for an additional 100 computer workstations and 300 extra study seats. Group study rooms have been expanded and study spaces provided for postgraduate students and academic staff. Shelving space has been reorganised and an internal link built between the library and the university's computing centre.

The current phase will see the ground level completely redesigned. Like an entrant in a makeover show, the library is making strides towards a transformation and all will be revealed in February 2008.

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Charles Darwin University Library Learning Precinct

The Casuarina Campus Learning Precinct is an initiative of the Charles Darwin University (CDU) Library funded by a grant from the Department of Education, Science and Training's Capital Development Pool, to redevelop the building into an exciting, technology-enabled, flexible learning space with a mix of electronic and physical resources available to clients as well as a range of support staff on hand. The ground floor of the building has been redesigned with modern furniture, colours and lighting and the latest in technology including wireless coverage for the whole building. The space is designed to support clients' flexible learning using cutting-edge technology, on-hand learning and technical support, and modern learning space design principles.

CDU has a very broad/diverse student profile, which has created certain challenges in ensuring that the resources, facilities and services of the Learning Precinct have the capacity to support the learning needs of this student base.

The Precinct, which opened in February 2005, is supported by a 'one-stop'

integrated service desk which is staffed at all times that the precinct is open. Staffing includes a mix of Liaison Librarians, Client Service Officers and a Learning Precinct Officer, who provide technical support and assistance at the point of need.



PCs in the Precinct have a wide range of software including email, Internet, word processing, and multimedia applications — some have scanners. All PCs have CD writers and USB ports. Flexible use of space is enhanced through wireless technology, a tablet PC lending service and the option for students to bring their own laptops into the Precinct and work anywhere within the building.

The Precinct is ideally positioned on the ground floor of the university library in the centre of the campus. The main auditorium, central teaching block and student facilities — café, bookshop, post office etc. — are close by.

The internal layout is open plan, using very few solid walls. Views out over a creek bed garden on one side and the strand provide a pleasing combination of vistas and textures. The area provides a mix of flexible study spaces for individuals and groups to undertake range of different study requirements. Printing and photocopying facilities are in close proximity to the workstations and the service desk.

In March 2007 a second Learning Precinct was opened at the Palmerston Campus Library and further developments are planned for our third campus library in Alice Springs.

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