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Reconciliation in Australia: the role of the academic library in empowering the Indigenous community

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Abstract

This article discusses the role of the academic library in contributing to the reconciliation process in Australia through the lens of James Cook University. Reconciliation in this context is defined as the process to bring together Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian peoples to overcome the gap that exists between them. Two of James Cook University's campuses are located in North Queensland, an area with a high Indigenous population. It has in place a Reconciliation Action Plan and Statement of Strategic Intent, which provide a clear statement supporting its Indigenous students and staff. This article focuses on the participation of James Cook University Library and Information Service in the university's reconciliation goals through four broad areas of interest: procurement, engagement, staffing, and information literacy training. Of particular note is the naming of the Townsville Campus library – the Eddie Koiki Mabo Library – in recognition of Mabo's connection with James Cook University, marking the significance of the role this Indigenous man played in Australia's history.

Introduction

In 2017, Universities Australia, the peak sector body in Australia, acknowledged its obligation to Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by releasing the Indigenous Strategy 2017–2020. The Strategy outlines Universities Australia's response to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and acknowledges that universities have 'responsibilities to Australia's Indigenous people, and to reflect the right of self-determination by working in partnership with Indigenous communities' (Universities Australia, 2017a: 10). James Cook University is one of 39 members of Universities Australia, and its Australian tropical campuses are located in North Queensland, an area with a high Indigenous population Australian Bureau of Statistics (2019). James Cook University (2019) is attempting to respond to this national strategy through its Statement of Strategic Intent, wherein it pledges to 'achieve genuine and sustainable reconciliation between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community'.

Reconciliation at James Cook University

James Cook University (2020a) has committed to enhance the lives of its Indigenous peoples, the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, through education and research by developing a Reconciliation Action Plan, with the latest version released in May 2020. Reconciliation is defined as being 'an honest and critical understanding of Australia's shared history' and developing 'mutual, positive and respectful relationships' with a view to 'working together to close the gap' that exists between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples of Australia (James Cook University, 2020b). This commitment is addressed through the university's Statement of Strategic Intent.

Professor Sandra Harding, vice chancellor and president of James Cook University, outlines the university's vision for reconciliation as being:

to build strong relationships, increase respect and improve opportunities for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This is important as within our region, a significant proportion of the population identifies as being of Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.

We will continue to raise awareness about our commitment to reconciliation by promoting our RAP [Reconciliation Action Plan] to students and staff, and by providing opportunities to engage with reconciliation activities. This can be reflected in our daily activities in championing University policies to promote cultural diversity and respect. In addition, as a Tertiary education institution, we can further promote Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural knowledge and perspectives into our curriculum (James Cook University, 2020a).

James Cook University acknowledges that the impact of colonisation, government policies, racial discrimination and prejudice, have had a major effect on the lives of Australia's First Peoples. We are committed to working together to achieve genuine and sustainable reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community (James Cook University Library and Information Service, 2020b).

Universities worldwide are endeavouring to provide culturally sensitive, in-depth support to ensure that more Indigenous students complete a university education, leading to greater workforce participation and personal success (Pechenkina and Anderson, 2011: 5).

Reconciliation and the Sustainable Development Goals

While addressing the Reconciliation Action Plan, the University is also addressing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, as the objectives are similar. In 2016, James Cook University was the first of 17 university signatories in Australia to the University Commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2017). By doing this, the university pledged to support the goals and, amongst other things, 'provide the educational opportunity for our students to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development' (James Cook University, 2020a). The Sustainable Development Goals were adopted in 2015 as a call to 'improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere' (United Nations, 2020). The Sustainable Development Goals Summit in 2019 called for a decade of attention, 'to achieve the goals by the target date of 2030, leaving no one behind' (United Nations, 2020). The overall focus of the 2030 Agenda of reducing inequality 'is of particular relevance to Indigenous peoples, who are almost universally in situations of disadvantage vis-à-vis other segments of the population' (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2016), with Sustainable Development Goals 2 (zero hunger), 4 (quality education), 8 (decent work and economic growth) and 10 (reduce inequalities) being of particular relevance for the education sector.

The role of libraries in reconciliation

University libraries are well placed to support the educational needs of the staff and student community, and play a significant role in supporting reconciliation within their institutions. In Australia, there have been very few studies carried out on the nature and extent of the services and support provided by academic libraries to their Indigenous communities. A notable study by Hare and Abbott (2015) reported on the results of a survey of Australian academic libraries and the programs that are in place to support Indigenous students. The study recognised that access to a university education is 'seen as a stepping stone to economic and social success in modern Australian society' and that 'Indigenous disadvantage is a major deficit in Australia which can be addressed in part through improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students' (81).

The areas of focus in Hare and Abbott's study were information literacy education, liaison support, and resources and study spaces. The results revealed that libraries were committed to the 'success of Indigenous students and [there was] considerable engagement with Indigenous issues' (81), with 84% of academic libraries indicating that they provided specific support. The main areas of improvement identified were interdepartmental communication and collaboration within the university, as well as increased training of library staff in Indigenous cultural sensitivity and the employment of Indigenous staff members (81).

Lilley (2019) emphasised the role that libraries can play in attracting Indigenous students to universities, and the need to have relevant services and resources in place to contribute to their success. Lilley reviewed the websites of Australian and New Zealand university libraries for content targeting Indigenous students – including Indigenous services and collections and other details. The analysis of the findings revealed that although there were some examples of best practice, there was considerable scope for improvement at Australian university libraries. Lilley concluded that it is paramount that academic libraries have services and support for Indigenous students in place, and are promoting them through a variety of means, including their web pages.

Australian academic libraries and Reconciliation Action Plans

It is evident that substantial progress has been made by Australian universities towards reconciliation. Many universities are developing a Reconciliation Action Plan, as this allows defined actions to be assessed at the end of the projected time frame. In this way, the organisation is then able to clearly assess progress in relation to reconciliation. Although some universities have statements, strategies or frameworks committing to reconciliation in Australia, in this section we focus solely on Reconciliation Action Plans, as they are considered best practice and recommended by Reconciliation Australia (2020).

In their study, Jones et al. (2013) reported that 16 out of the 39 Australian universities had adopted a Reconciliation Action Plan or Reconciliation Statement, with 5 having a current date range. As these authors assigned equal value to Reconciliation Statements and Reconciliation Action Plans in their article, we have just extracted the information referring to Reconciliation Action Plans from the tabulated data (Jones et al., 2013: 46–47) for the purposes of our article.

The findings from a recent content analysis of all Australian university websites that we carried out at the end of 2020 demonstrate that 35 out of the 39 universities have had a Reconciliation Action Plan, with 24 of these institutions having a current plan (Table 1).

Reconciliation Action Plans	Year	
	2013	2020
Reconciliation Action Plan any time	6	35
Reconciliation Action Plan current (date indicated)	5	24

Table 1 Reconciliation Action Plans across the 39 Australian Universities

Furthermore, a review of Australian university academic library websites has revealed that the majority of university libraries are now providing specific support to their Indigenous students. This is supplemented by content received from the email list of national deputy and associate university librarians (Table 2).

Library resourcing and information	Number University libraries
Dedicated library guides – 1-3 guides	30
Dedicated library guides – 4-6 guides	4
Dedicated liaison librarians/library support staff – 1-3 staff	17
Dedicated liaison librarians/library support staff – 4-6 staff	2
Identifies Indigenous staff positions	2
Dedicated web pages	3

Table 2 Indigenous support at the 39 Australian University Libraries

Of the total number of university libraries in Australia, 34 list Library Guides on their websites to support Indigenous students or assist those students undertaking Indigenous studies. Of these, 30 list one to three Library Guides and four libraries list four or more Library Guides. It should be noted that not all libraries make the details of their liaison or library support staff accessible from their web pages. Of those that do, 19 libraries list a liaison librarian or other support staff member to support Indigenous students or those students undertaking Indigenous studies programs. Two institutions, including James Cook University, have identified positions for an Indigenous library staff member.

A further three university libraries have a web page dedicated to an aspect of Indigenous knowledge. One of these is James Cook University library's Eddie Koiki Mabo Timeline website, which was set up in 2020.

James Cook University Library and Eddie Koiki Mabo

The story of the late Eddie Koiki Mabo is intrinsically woven into the story of James Cook University, and telling his story is both necessary and highly appropriate to the discussion in hand. Eddie Koiki Mabo (1936–1992) was born on the island of Mer, one of the Torres Strait Islands in Far North Queensland, and later lived in Townsville and worked at James Cook University. Mabo was a politically active man and had a strong sense of himself as a Mer Islander. It was during his time at James Cook University working as a groundskeeper that he made use of the library and spent his lunch breaks reading (James Cook University

Library and Information Service, 2020b). In particular, he was interested in reading about what was said about his home and people in Alfred Haddon's Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expeditions to the Torres Straits 1901-1935. He attended lectures through his friendship with the academics Henry Reynolds and Noel Loos, and he also contributed as a guest lecturer in Noel Loos's Race and Culture course. A turning point in his life came when, in conversation with Loos and Reynolds, he discovered that he had no legal rights to the land on Mer, his home island, which he often spoke to them about (Loos, 1996).

In 1981, the Land Rights and the Future of Australian Race Relations conference was held at the Townsville Campus of James Cook University. This event was organised by the Townsville Treaty Committee and the James Cook University Students' Union. Co-chaired by Mabo, it brought together the people who would be the plaintiffs and a legal team that saw the merit in his case, and they ended up challenging the Queensland Government and eventually winning the case in the High Court of Australia in 1992. It was a long and difficult journey, but the outcome saw recognition of native title in Australia, sweeping aside the enlarged notion of terra nullius from Australian jurisprudence. It has been less than 30 years since this racist perception that the Indigenous people inhabiting Australia were 'too low in the scale of organisation' to be considered 'owners' of the land was put aside (Cassidy, 1994). Mabo's significant legacy came about through the combination of his own activism, finding support in the political environment at James Cook University at the time, and the people he met who shared their knowledge of history, law and politics. These important events are recognised and commemorated at James Cook University. The Townsville library was named the Eddie Koiki Mabo Library in 2008 and has celebrated this each year with an art exhibition and other events. The Mabo Interpretive Wall, launched in June 2020, in the foyer of the library and its accompanying website tell this story in detail (James Cook University Library and Information Service, 2020b; Wilson, 2008).

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library, Information and Resource Network Protocols

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library, Information and Resource Network (ATSILIRN) Protocols were first released in 1995. The Protocols were a response to Indigenous concerns, which included issues such as

historical exclusion from libraries; the offensive nature of much of the material about Indigenous people in library collections and archives; subject headings that described Indigenous peoples and cultures in ways that had little to do with how Indigenous peoples described themselves, and which demeaned Indigenous peoples and cultures; access issues for Indigenous peoples and materials; and general Indigenous service issues. (Nakata, et al. 2005, p. 185).

The Protocols were developed to act as 'a guide for library and information practitioners in the provision of appropriate services and management of items about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures', and to 'offer a path to reconciliation, a guide to community engagement, and a means to develop cultural competence' (Garwood-Houng and Blackburn, 2014: 1). The intention was to cover all aspects of library services but, at the same time, libraries were not required to implement every Protocol. Local priorities and

needs would determine which Protocols were implemented. The Protocols were updated with additional content in 2012 (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Library, Information and Resource Network 2012). The Protocols cover governance and management, content and perspectives, intellectual property, accessibility and use, description and classification, secret or sacred or sensitive materials, offensive materials, staffing, professional practice, awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and issues, copying and repatriation of records, and the digital environment.

Library Services

The commitment necessary, as identified in the Hare and Abbott (2015) and Lilley (2019) studies, is visible in James Cook University's Library and Information Service, judging by the range of services and support it has in place for its Indigenous students. The services that are being provided can be classified into four broad areas: procurement, engagement, employment, and information literacy training. In responding to the University's Reconciliation Action Plan and commitment to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, the Library and Information Service endorses the ATILIRN Protocols.

Procurement

A key feature of the ATILIRN Protocols is to ensure that Indigenous students feel welcome in a familiar environment. Accordingly, the Library and Information Service's procurement policies are an overt attempt to acquire Indigenous artwork and artefacts, as well as resource materials.

University campus library buildings can seem large and potentially intimidating for Indigenous and first-in-family students. The library on the main Townsville Campus is recognised for its outstanding brutalist architecture (James Cook University Library and Information Service, 2020d). The architect, James Birrell, used raw concrete in its construction and curved lines to fit into the tropical dry-savannah-woodland setting. This is in keeping with Birrell's philosophy to design buildings that touch gently on the earth; so, although at first glance it might seem intimidating, it has been built with sensitivity to its surrounding bushland setting. If it is interpreted as large and intimidating, visual cues can be utilised to promote a feeling of belonging within the building's spaces. Pukepuke and Dawe (2013) included Pacific Islander lei (flower garland) and tapa (cloth made from mulberry bark) the creation of their safe space for Indigenous learners at the Unitec Institute of Technology, New Zealand. Brown (2019) further emphasised this practice when he referred to the use of artwork to indigenise a learning space to create a unique location for Indigenous students at the University of New Mexico. The Library and Information Service at James Cook University has responsibility for the University's art collection, which has a growing number of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artworks (James Cook University Library and Information Service, 2020c). These Indigenous artworks are prominently displayed around the campuses, including in library spaces, in an attempt to encourage a feeling of belonging for the Indigenous community. The Mabo Interpretive Wall, as a permanent installation, includes an Acknowledgement of Country, which was

developed with the area's Traditional Owners, the Bindal people of the Birrigubba Nation, and designed to have prominence and be a welcoming statement to Indigenous visitors as they engage with the Mabo story. Acknowledgements of Country in a university environment are often used in spaces where more than one Traditional Owner group should be addressed. In the case of the Mabo Wall, which is in a defined physical location with settled ownership, we also consulted with the director of the university's Indigenous Education and Research Centre, who supported the decision to engage with our local Traditional Owners. We are very pleased with the result that all visitors are, in turn, able to engage with the creation story of the Bindal people and share in this knowledge, and are grateful to Dorothy Savage, a respected elder from the Bindal and Birriah clans of the Birrigubba Nation and of South Sea Islander heritage, for her work, which allowed this to happen.

Academic library collections also play an integral role in ensuring a feeling of belonging and safety for the Indigenous community. Dudley (2019) made a strong link between valuing Indigenous knowledge, the decolonisation of library collections and cultural safety. Accordingly, the James Cook University Library and Information Service (2015) works to provide a feeling of belonging and safety for its Indigenous community through its collection purchases. There is an emphasis on collecting monographs produced by Indigenous authors and publishers, particularly in relation to the University's geographical footprint. The evaluation of database subscriptions involves consideration of Australian content, with added consideration given to databases with Indigenous Australian content. Other miscellaneous purchases include recycled outdoor mats, which are available for loan. These mats feature designs by Indigenous artists and are sold by a business that is attributing their designs fairly and providing income to the artists.

Engagement

Alongside procurement, engagement for the James Cook University Library and Information Service means acknowledgement of First Australians as custodians of the land for tens of thousands of years. As mentioned, the university's main library is named after Eddie Koiki Mabo. The library's prominent displays tell of his life and his role in changing the law to recognise native title in Australia.

An academic library that promotes an environment of respect and safety for Indigenous Australian history and culture is one that can play a role in improving Indigenous Australian social determinants of health (Lowitja Institute, 2020; Smith and Robertson, 2020). Respect, leading to growing cultural safety, also contributes to Universities Australia's (2017b) goal of increasing and retaining Indigenous participation within higher education, and building non-Indigenous understanding of our Indigenous communities. Respect is also the second pillar of James Cook University's Reconciliation Action Plan. To that effect, the Library and Information Service engages in a number of both small- and large-scale activities aimed at promoting reconciliation and safety for the Indigenous community.

The combination of many small acts of recognition can have a greater impact. The Library and Information Service's small acts of recognition include:

- The Cairns and Townsville campuses' library buildings use digital displays to communicate services and events; this signage includes reconciliation messages. In Townsville, it also explains why the library was named after Eddie Koiki Mabo.
- Acknowledgement of Country statements are displayed on service desks. These statements are a way of showing awareness and respect for the Traditional Owners of the land on which our day-to-day business is conducted. The Cairns Traditional Owner groups are Djabugay (pronounced Jap-ur-kai), Yirrganydji (Irri-kan-dji) and Gimuy Yidinji (Goom-eye Yidinji); in Townsville, the groups are Bindal (Bin-dul) and Wulgurukaba (Wulga-rooka-ba).
- Information about Eddie Koiki Mabo is included in the Townsville Campus library orientation tours.
- The Library and Information Service is in the early stages of collecting statistics that will provide data on Indigenous-related research projects and assignments, and self-identified Indigenous researchers.
- Indigenous Australian art and book displays are organised for National Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC (National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee) Week, Mabo Day and Indigenous Literacy Day, and are promoted through the Library and Information Service's social media channels.
- In 2019, we participated in the Great Book Swap to raise funds for the Indigenous Literacy Foundation; the event raised AU\$800.
- Since the State of Queensland introduced a container refund scheme, the library and co-located services have donated all funds raised to the Indigenous Literacy Foundation.

The more significant activities aimed at promoting recognition and safety for local Indigenous communities include:

- The near annual Eddie Koiki Mabo Library Indigenous art exhibition (James Cook University Library and Information Service, 2020a). This event provides Library and Information Service staff, students and visitors with the opportunity to participate in the Reconciliation Action Plan in a broad public manner. As a vibrant celebration, the exhibition enlivens our public space and generates conversation about not only the art, but also the building's name, the man behind it, and the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, recognising and valuing cultural diversity as an asset which enriches the life of the university community.

- The 2020 installation of the Mabo Interpretative Wall and the associated Eddie Koiki Mabo Timeline website (James Cook University Library and Information Service, 2020b). This project also recognises the contribution of Eddie Mabo's wife, Bonita Mabo, for her Indigenous and South Sea Islander advocacy (Reconciliation Australia, 2018). The Traditional Owner group is acknowledged in this installation (James Cook University Library and Information Service, 2020b).
- In recognition of James Cook University's 50th anniversary, the Library and Information Service has been releasing 50 treasures selected from its Special Collections. These precious items have been digitised and preserved in the North Queensland heritage repository, and each item has a special statement explaining why it has been selected. Twenty per cent of the treasures are either created by Indigenous people or directly related to Indigenous people – for example, a video recording of Eddie Mabo delivering a lecture to the Race and Culture course in 1982, a bark painting by Goobalathaldin Dick Roughsey, and other artworks and written histories.
- Assigning subject headings that reflect the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols for libraries, archives and information services (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library, Information and Resource Network, 2012) is an ongoing project.
- Support for a senior liaison librarian and an Indigenous library liaison officer to represent the James Cook University Library and Information Service in the Queensland University Libraries Office of Cooperation's Indigenous Strategy Reference Group to promote networking and information-sharing, and make recommendations for member libraries on Indigenous matters, particularly in relation to Universities Australia's Indigenous Strategy 2017–2020 (2017a). The Indigenous Strategy Reference Group has been working to provide member libraries with guidance on the development of a library reconciliation maturity model (Queensland University Libraries Office, n.d.).
- Recent negotiation by the Library and Information Service of a scholarship for an Australian Indigenous higher-degree research student with SAGE Asia-Pacific to assist with research costs.

Staffing

Indigenous recruitment and culturally aware staff are key elements for providing culturally safe academic libraries. Within the wider Australian higher education context, Universities Australia's (2017a) Indigenous Strategy 2017–2020 urges Australian universities to increase their percentage of Indigenous staff and improve wider staff cultural competency. Smith and Robertson's (2020: 130) recent publication clearly links the recruitment of Indigenous staff to Indigenous student success: 'Aboriginal people, when they go into a university...they want universities to be Indigenised, they want to see Aboriginal staff inside universities'. Moreover, cultural competency training is a must for staff to give them some understanding of the cultural and study needs of their Indigenous community (Lilley, 2019).

As well as artwork and displays providing a welcoming environment for Indigenous students, the employment of Indigenous staff is another key feature of the ATSI LIRN Protocols. Indigenous staff should be seen behind service counters and in workrooms and offices. The Library and Information Service has had a continuing position for an Indigenous library liaison officer since 1995, a role that has been occupied by several different staff and is currently based at the Cairns Campus library. The person in this role spends a significant amount of time at public service points, providing Indigenous students with a welcoming presence. This person also moves around the University, in particular spending time at the Indigenous Education and Research Centre, in cognisance of the Centre's requirements, creating links between the Library and Indigenous students which otherwise may not happen. In addition, the Library and Information Service shares casual vacancies with the Centre to advertise to its students. The Cairns Campus library has had some success in attracting Indigenous student casuals to work in the library. The Cairns Campus library has benefitted from having Indigenous Australians in client service positions, and students always appreciate well-paid on-campus employment. Further, staff are encouraged to complete cultural competency training and attend local Indigenous events (Hare and Abbott, 2015). Building staff's cultural sensitivity is important, as any client services or liaison librarian may have formal or informal contact with Indigenous students in a variety of ways, whether via reference desks, an instant-messaging chat service, or information and digital literacy classes. All of these initiatives relate to an active and wholehearted engagement with Indigenous students.

Information literacy training

Providing information literacy training and support to students ensures that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to benefit from university education to the fullest extent. Within the Indigenous community, this is an area of major concern. Universities Australia (2017b) has targeted the higher enrolment and retention of Indigenous students as a goal for Australian universities. University pathway programs are aimed at preparing students who are not ready to study for success in degree-level courses, and internal data reveals that James Cook University's pathway programs have seen a strong Indigenous uptake. One of the goals of pathway programs is to develop students' core academic skills, which includes digital and information literacy skills training (Forrest et al., 2014). Accordingly, liaison librarians and the Indigenous library liaison officer contribute to Indigenous student orientations at the start of the semester, and are embedded in the University's Tertiary Access Course, Certificate and Diploma of Higher Education programs, teaching core skills – that is, information and digital literacies and related academic skills. Liaison librarians deliver information literacy training at the regional, and remote, study centres of Mackay, Mount Isa and Thursday Island within the state of Queensland, and participate in orientations for the University's Remote Area Teacher Education Program and the recently introduced Master of Philosophy (Indigenous) course. As advocated by Rochecouste et al. (2017), library staff make a point of explicitly relating information literacy training to a tangible student need – completing assessments. This learning and teaching strategy works for most students, including Indigenous students, and ensures that they are clear about the purpose and benefits of the particular training (Rochecouste et al., 2017).

Library Guides are the primary online information literacy platform and contribute to Universities Australia's (2017b) goal for Australian universities to increase non-Indigenous

understanding of and engagement with our Indigenous community. As such, Traditional Owner statements have been included in the footers of all Library Guides. There is a recently refreshed Indigenous Studies Guide, and resources for Indigenous topics and assessment are embedded in many discipline guides (e.g. Education) and subject-specific guides (e.g. Australian People: Indigeneity and Multiculturalism). Discipline- and subject-specific Library Guides are embedded in James Cook University's student learning management system, providing a strong connection between subject content and library resources, online training and services. The year 2020 marked the 50th anniversary of James Cook University and saw the launch of the Eddie Koiki Mabo Timeline website, which provides authoritative information on the life and achievements of Eddie Koiki Mabo, and expresses the library's pride in having the Townsville Campus library named after him (James Cook University Library and Information Service, 2020b). The Timeline's usage statistics reveal that it has received a phenomenal amount of attention during its short life. Work is currently underway to revive the Indigenous Family History Library Guide, which will be followed by the development of a new Indigenous Curriculum Resources Guide.

Challenges

As this article demonstrates, while much progress has been made through these initiatives of active and wholehearted engagement with Indigenous students, reconciliation is an ongoing process. James Cook University's (2015) 'Collection development guidelines' clearly recognise the ATILIRN Protocols, but the Library and Information Service's commitment to reconciliation principles and inclusion for other marginalised members of our community could be formally recognised and progressed with the development of diversity guidelines. Kandiuk (2014) and Dudley (2019) advocate incorporating diversity and inclusion principles in libraries' formal documents to correct biases and remove structural barriers to the full use of library facilities, services and resources. Without formalisation, the Library and Information Service is left vulnerable to lost momentum due to budget and staff changes. Currently, the Library and Information Service contributes to the employment aspirations recommended by the University's Reconciliation Action Plan by having an identified Indigenous position. However, the Library and Information Service would like to provide more employment opportunities to our Indigenous community within a system that allows for alternative pathways into mainstream positions. A new Indigenous Working Group has recently been set up with cross-University membership, including the director of the Library and Information Service, and it is hoped that more recruitment will be one result.

There is a distinct need for regular consultations with the Indigenous community to gain feedback and improve library services, facilities and resources, as it can only be our Indigenous community that determines if they feel culturally safe engaging with the library (Dudley, 2019). Professor Martin Nakata, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Education and Strategy), is unapologetic that it is the rest of the university's work to continue the reconciliation process while he furthers the research goals of the Indigenous Education and Research Centre, and we fully support his stance. Professor Nakata has always been there to listen to our ideas and make recommendations, and we know we have backing at the executive level for Library and Information Service initiatives. We also consult with Gail Mabo, the daughter of Eddie Mabo, as part of our ongoing Mabo legacy. We do need to improve our consultation at the student level and although we regularly survey students for

their impressions of our service, this is not directly targeting the Indigenous student experience. Setting internal goals and developing strategies aimed at improving our Indigenous community's library experience is commendable, but as Kandiuk (2014) argues, it is the Indigenous user's actual experience within a library service that determines success.

The adoption of a maturity model approach would facilitate the Library and Information Service's movement from ad hoc and potentially superficial engagement to optimised engagement with the Reconciliation Action Plan's priority areas. There are a number of models that could be adopted. Reconciliation Australia (2017) suggests a four-step Reconciliation Action Plan framework maturity model (RISE: rise, innovate, stretch, elevate), while Wademan et al. (2007) provide a useful overview of a five-step people capability maturity model (initial, managed, defined, predictable, optimising). Each of these easily adaptable models provides structure for libraries to reach deeper levels of engagement with their Indigenous communities. Within James Cook University's Library and Information Service, there is recognition that adoption of a maturity model would aid in evaluating the success of the activity of the Reconciliation Action Plan.

Conclusion

This article has attempted to outline the unique position of James Cook University's Library and Information Service in supporting its Indigenous community in accordance with the University's Reconciliation Action Plan. At the same time, it acknowledges the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and seeks to work towards attaining the relevant targets as it impacts Indigenous Australians. Over the years, numerous services have been introduced and resources acquired by the Library and Information Service, which all the while has been striving to respect the ATSILIRN Protocols and respond to the strategy outlined by Universities Australia wherever and whenever possible. Reconciliation, however, is a weighty responsibility that needs to be undertaken on a continuous basis. Writing this article, and reflecting on the Library and Information Service's reconciliation activities and journey, has made us, the authors, aware that although we have demonstrated a history of commitment to reconciliation, there is a need to further deepen that resolve overall. Nevertheless, the Library and Information Service is proud to have such a strong connection to Indigenous life, culture and history in Australia, and is absolutely dedicated to this journey.

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