New look for major NT library

After 12 weeks of closure due to major refurbishment, Casuarina Library, the largest of four Darwin City Council libraries, re-opened its doors to the public on Monday 15 December. It was with great excitement and anticipation from staff who had worked so long and hard to prepare for the occasion, with many customers waiting at the door eager to check out the new look library.

The result of major refurbishments at Casuarina Library

The library underwent a $1.6m revamp, with all new carpets, paintwork, mostly new or recovered furniture, all new public and staff computers, new shelving and air-conditioning. A completely re-designed workroom was also part of the renovations. Cecilia from CK Design International worked extensively on the new design and décor, including the incorporation of the living room concept. The professionalism of Cecilia and CKD made the whole project, from design to completion, a huge success.

The library now has four separate living rooms covering Home & Garden, Health & Wellness, Language & Travel and Parenting. These are proving very popular with customers. Also welcome is the more open space and the extra natural sunlight coming into the library, and the general freshness of the new facility. While using the same floor area the designers have managed to make the library appear more spacious, using the available space more effectively and giving the library a more homely feeling.

Customer comments have been very positive, generally enjoying the warm ambience of the new layout, and sensed some major changes in the quality of support services offered. The inclusion of a dedicated returns room has meant less books on the circulation counter, and staff are able to focus more attention on customer service. New self checkout systems have also contributed to allowing staff to spend more time with customers. There are now 19 public access computers, and distinct areas for young adults and group studies. The children's area now includes small table & chairs and frog bean bags.

Manager of Library Services, Karen Conway, put in many long hours dealing with the issues involved in such a massive project. Staff also worked hard to re-shelving all the items in readiness.

The official re-opening for Casuarina Library will be in February.

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Working together, apart

2008 saw an enormous growth in the use of collaborative web 2.0 tools by public library staff in NSW. The state wide Learning 2.0 program, coordinated by the State Library of New South Wales, began in February 2008, helping build skills and enthusiasm in this area. The course is available at **http://nswpubliclibrarieslearning2.blogspot.com/**.

State Library of NSW staff also participated in the Learning 2.0 program.

The most popular web 2.0 tool for information sharing and collaboration in New South Wales public libraries is the wiki. Wikis have been used to facilitate online state wide discussions and information sharing. They are managed by the members of state wide working groups including the Document Delivery group (**http://ill.wetpaint.com**), the Readers Advisory group (**http://readersadvisory.wetpaint. com**) and the Marketing Group (**http://plnswmarketing. wetpaint.com**). Over 120 people are registered as writers and editors, which means that more than 5% of public library staff in New South Wales are active wiki contributors. As well as these state wide wikis there are several zone or region based collaborations.

All Learning 2.0 participants were asked to record their learning experiences in a blog, and consequently we have seen a number of blogs being developed as a vehicle for sharing ideas and experiences. These include one from the Readers Advisory group (**http://readersadvisory.wetpaint. com**), two from the Reference and Information Services Group, one for new technology (**http://www.nsw-risg.org/ newtech//**) and one for discussion on broader reference issues (**http://www.nsw-risg.org/weblog/**). All of these blogs have multiple writers.

There is also an online forum from the Reference and Information Services Group (**http://www.nsw-risg.org/ forum/**) – the place to discuss everything that is reference; and a Flickr group where members have stored the images and ideas from several seminars (**http://www.flickr.com/ photos/nsw_risg/collections/**).

Comments about RSS from the Learning 2.0 course participants included:

I think RSS is great fun and helps to sort out the garbage from what I really want to read.

I enjoyed working with feeds and found the biggest problem was limiting my selection. There are so many good sites to subscribe to.

This increased awareness and use of web 2.0 tools is beginning to have an additional impact in the workplace, with new and redesigned jobs requiring web 2.0 skills. The use of these tools has also opened up connections between public library staff helping to reduce professional isolation.

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