Supporting the Executive Development of Fire-fighters

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Abstract:
This presentation will highlight the development of an EDTRANET [**Professional e-Resource Centre**] at the AIPM Library. It will discuss. Building and managing a professional e-Learning Centre which supports traditional teaching and learning alongside the new online teaching and learning methodologies. Managing, and communicating, collective knowledge resources, efficiently and effectively. Delivering better education services to students, achieving enhanced education outcomes, and linking learning resources to the curriculum.

Background:
Since 1993 the Australian Institute of Police Management (AIPM) has been providing Executive Development training for fire and emergency services managers for the Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC). The original courses lacked academic rigour and in 1996 it was decided that AFAC executive development courses should be conducted and presented in the same way as the Police Management Development Program (PMDP) but tailored to fit the specific needs of fire and emergency services managers. The AFAC course became the Executive Development Program (EDP)

PMDP and EDP

The Police Management Development Program (PMDP) and Executive Development Program (EDP) are developmental, highly applied and experientially based. Case studies and simulations are based on actual events. There are opportunities for individual and group work, and exercises that help participants better understand their own behaviours and how they affect others.

The content includes business planning, project management, strategic planning, problem solving, strategic management, change management, risk management, the management of large IT projects, policy development, financial management, human resource management, industrial relations, media management and leadership.

The PMDP and the EDP are fully accredited with the NSW Tertiary Education Board and on successful completion of the PMDP and EDP participants are awarded a Graduate Certificate in Applied Management

Graduate Certificate in Applied Management (PMDP and EDP)

People who complete the Grad Cert App Mgt have:

- A thorough knowledge of the principles of management and leadership in large organisations;
- Enhanced skills in the application of contemporary management and leadership practices;
- Enhanced inter-agency professional networks, and a capacity to exploit these networks for inter-agency operations and initiatives; and
- A clear understanding of their knowledge and abilities, and an effective plan for their further professional development.

The AIPM also offers a higher-level Executive Leadership courses for Police, Fire and Emergency Services. These are the Police Executive leadership Program (PELP) and the Executive Leadership Program (ELP)

PELP and ELP

The Police Executive Leadership Program (PELP) and the Executive Leadership Program (ELP) are designed for senior executives and leaders who have been identified as having the potential to achieve the most senior executive leadership positions within their organisations.

Participants share a strong interest in strategic leadership development in organisations undergoing continuous change.

PELP and ELP take a strategic leadership perspective, focusing on critical issues that shape future police and public safety organisations. A number of nationally and internationally recognised presenters address participants on particular aspects of executive leadership in contemporary Australian society.

PELP and ELP participants are required to undertake a strategic policy paper in which they identify and research an issue, then develop and apply a comprehensive business planning strategy for implementation in their agency. Many papers have national significance, and result in fundamental improvements in service delivery.   On successful completion of these programs participants are eligible for a Graduate Diploma in Executive Leadership (PELP and ELP)

People who complete the Grad Dip Exec Leadership have:

- A thorough knowledge of executive leadership roles, responsibilities and accountabilities;
- An awareness of major law enforcement and public safety issues (both administrative and operational) and a capacity to provide effective management and leadership in these areas;
- A capacity to apply knowledge and skills in a strategic and operationally effective manner;

- Enhanced inter-agency professional networks, and a capacity to exploit these networks for inter-agency operations and initiatives; and
- A clear understanding of their knowledge and abilities, and an effective plan for their further professional development.

Learning Methodology

The Institute's learning methodology is one of applying adult learning principles within non-judgemental, self-directed parameters. In other words, the learning and assessment procedures are all developmental rather than judgemental like most universities. This methodology used by the AIPM focuses on participants' professional developmental needs and their capacity to add value to their organisation as a return on investment through an applied case study problem-solving, approach. Within this learning environment, participants can retreat from their organisational responsibilities, undertake critical self-reflection and have the opportunity to analyse strategic issues in leadership and management, debate alternative solutions to issues and develop professional networks.

Supporting the Executive Development Programs PELP/ELP and PMDP/EDP

The Library has an integral role in the conduct of these courses. Participants on all programs come from all over Australia, New Zealand and many other countries. Prior to 2000 all course materials were sent to participants in hard copy. This was a highly labour intensive task and very expensive in paper and postage costs. With the advent of more sophisticated technology, the development of 'Online Education' and a general acceptance that the Internet would be able to play a large role in delivering course content, the AIPM made a decision to deliver its course supporting materials online. This was a big commitment and required an even bigger commitment from the Library staff. The decision to 'deliver online' was the catalyst for the AIPM Library to develop an Electronic Resource Centre and Edtranet/Intranet. The Resource Centre would be more than just a resource for Distance Learning students; it would be a resource that would enhance 'Knowledge Management' within the AIPM and ultimately, the police and public safety community. Essentially, we needed to use the Internet to enrich the educational experience.

In 1997 Neil L. Rudenstine, President of Harvard University stated that:

- The Internet can provide access to essentially unlimited sources of information not conveniently obtainable through other means;
- The Internet allows for the creation of unusually rich course materials;
- The Internet enhances the vital process of "conversational" learning;
- The Internet reinforces the conception of students as active agents in the process of learning, not passive recipients of knowledge from teachers and authoritative texts.

With the growth in distance learning that has occurred, both on the undergraduate and postgraduate level, the need to support staff, students, and employees involved in this learning has also increased. Our officers in policing and public safety are caught up in a changing paradigm that requires higher learning and qualifications as well as understanding of the rapidly changing community and environment. Additionally, there

is the notion of 'self-directed' or 'lifelong' learning and the demands this places on support services.

We believed that the library must be able to sustain learners and faculty globally with access to a broad base of knowledge required to complete programs successfully.

The AIPM Resource Centre has been developed to provide curriculum content and support; and industry related resources for AIPM course participants and the broader policing and public safety agencies throughout Australasia. There is an emphasis on industry specific resources and the latest management practices, theories and trends.

Philosophy:

Underpinning the development of Online support for our patrons is the following philosophy: (*based on the Canadian Library Association guidelines for 'Best Practice'*)

- ¨ Access to library resources is essential for quality in education and professional development regardless of where the learners and programs are located.
- ¨ Information can be delivered to anyone, anywhere, at any time
- ¨ Access to library and information resources is essential for quality in developing policies, strategic plans and patrol management.
- ¨ Registered patrons and course instructors/presenters who are located away from the AIPM campus are entitled to library and computer-based services as open and equitable as those provided for patrons and instructors/presenters on campus.
- ¨ Because distant learners are often disadvantaged in terms of library access, equitable library services in this context may involve more personalized services than would be expected on campus. It cannot be assumed that traditional library services, designed to support on-campus users, will meet the information needs of individuals involved in distance learning.
- ¨ The AIPM is responsible for ensuring that its distant learners have access to appropriate library resources, including resources associated with the Internet and World Wide Web.
- ¨ Distant learners may choose to use local libraries for their academic needs, but the AIPM must have the appropriate resources available.
- ¨ Distant learners lacking local access to relevant library resources or trained library staff require a means to obtain library materials and support services directly from the AIPM.
- ¨ Effective library support for a distance or distributed learning program requires advance planning by the Library in consultation with faculty, program administrators and other appropriate campus personnel, and with librarians at unaffiliated libraries.

Supporting Online Education

Numerous studies, both published and unpublished have identified that access to library and information services geographically close and convenient to their place of work, and/or their home, is the prime requirement of students. This applies particularly to students separated by distance or by available time from the institution at which they are registered for a course of study. The Internet has provided the means in which Libraries can meet this demand electronically.

Distance learners will expect libraries to provide services that satisfy most or all of their information and learning support needs. This is a perfectly reasonable expectation, yet libraries may well struggle to provide such a service. For the learner, the key issue is access.

Our Edtranet allows us to keep all resources current and updated regularly through minimal effort. The Library staff are key components in the collaborative approach to online teaching and learning.

Distance learners are customers who are more demanding of good service. This makes it imperative that library and information services assess their users' needs, and continually monitor and review their provision to ensure as close a match as possible between student needs and the library and information services offered to meet them.

The Edtranet Library Project is seen not as a replacement for onsite library services but rather as added value, providing remote services that the physical libraries may not be able to provide. It is not unusual for the lives of law enforcement and other public safety officers to be balancing acts. While their coursework requires them to do library work, sometimes their schedules make that extremely difficult. By creating the Virtual Library on the AIPM Resource Centre we are offering our clients, especially the growing number of non-traditional users and course participants, an opportunity to successfully complete their assignments while juggling their complicated lives—users who have severe time limitations can log in at any time of the day or night. Users, for example, who must stay at home evenings, perhaps because of childcare necessities, are able to log on and work without leaving their homes. They can search databases and access library catalogues at a time that suits them and in greater comfort.

Likewise, those officers working shiftwork or involved in lengthy surveillance work are able to login from a variety of locations.
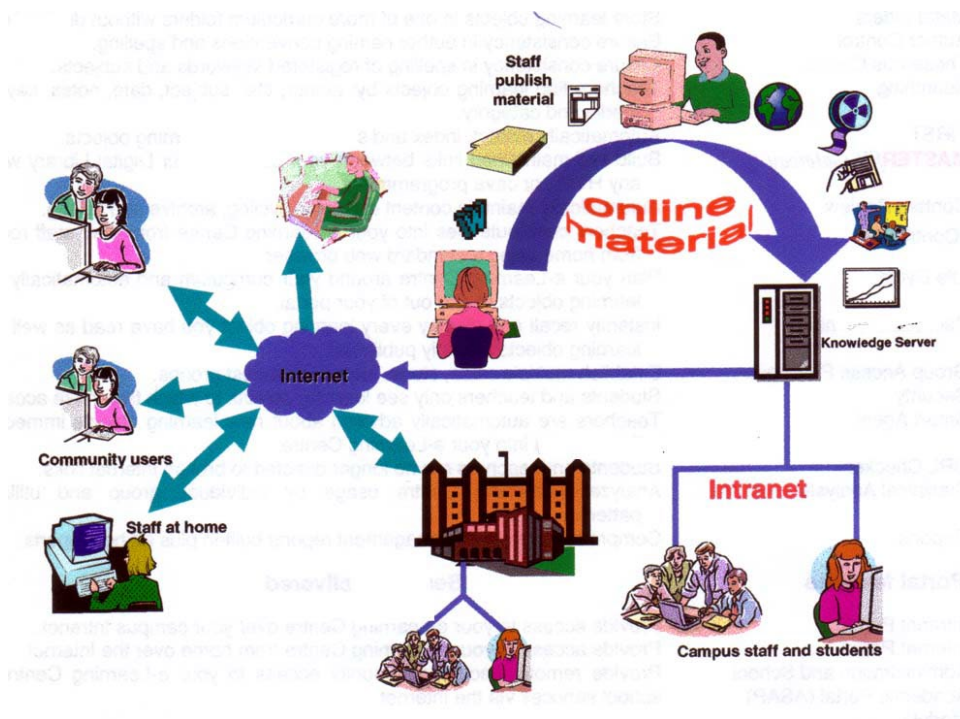
In addition, the very nature of the project has led toward the librarian providing a set of resources tailored toward the specific course need. Ultimately, the concept of

faculty member and librarian working more closely as a team in order to provide course participants better information to guide the participants' learning can only benefit the whole educational endeavour. By working together, teaching faculty and librarian have the opportunity to not only provide better information but also to create a community of learning that demonstrates the interconnectedness of reading, writing, and research.

Resources are accessible via the AIPM Website. http://library.aipm.gov.au

Course participants access their course information and reading material from a 'Space' set aside for 'My Courses'. Once they choose 'My Courses' they will be given a list of courses they are enrolled in. Course materials are organised in sections, subjects and Learning Objects.

 To facilitate access, to the Digital Library information is organised by subject through a series of folders and sub folders. The folders can be browsed or searched by subject. The Resource Centre contains many full-text journal articles that can be searched by author, title or keyword. It contains useful and interesting information about AIPM activities and projects, newsletters and AIPM publications. It also contains links to related Websites and electronic journals.

Copyright issues were a big consideration in developing the Edtranet/Digital library. Working in conjunction with the software is a program called Copymaster. This program ensures that every time a full text article is opened the user must acknowledge the copyright legislation. This flag is an electronic version of the commonly used stamp for Inter-Library loans and distance education resources. Copymaster also keeps statistical records so that each time an article is opened a record is generated that meets all copyright requirements. These records can be produced at anytime, in a format approved by the authorities, if needed for a copyright audit

In addition, a set of tutorials has been added to enhance the Library's use, including tutorials on effectively using Internet search engines, creating effective search strategies, and critical analysis skills.

The Problems:

- Since connection to the AIPM Resource Centre is via the Internet, slow connections or frequent disconnections dampen the enthusiasm of even the most enthusiastic user. These can cause delays, interruptions, and breaks in communication.

- The various 'Firewalls' utilised by the various jurisdictions appear to be a handicap in downloading some information

- The legalities of licensing agreements

- Authentication and authorization are systems issues that must be dealt with in order to effectively provide distance learners with access to licensed databases and e-reserve files. It is necessary to ensure that the patrons using distance services are who they say they are, that they are currently enrolled as course participants, alumni or other registration as stated, that they are eligible for any special services available to them, and that the computer systems that permit

distance learners access to course reserves and to licensed databases recognize them.

■ There is still an inertia factor – some course participants and other patrons are comfortable with conventional access and are reluctant to learn new technology. We have to convince them that there is an advantage to them to change from traditional ways to using electronic services. We are still evaluating and developing our education programs for them.

■ Intellectual property remains a key issue as distance-learning programs become better established. Questions related to ownership arise when faculty begin creating online content. Closely related to this is the issue of copyright. With the recent innovations of e-reserves and full-text database licensing come a plethora of difficult questions.

■ Who is responsible for the development and implementation of copyright policies?
■ Who will instruct faculty as to what is permissible in the online environment? And

■ Who will obtain permission for course materials and electronic reserves? Libraries active in supporting distance learners already play a key role in these areas. Others establishing such services will have to determine what role they can and want to have in such activities.

LESSONS

■ There are real obstacles. Like so much about the Internet, these obstacles have nothing to do with technology but rather have to do with people. E.g websites that are not kept up-to-date or disappear overnight; technical service help from the IT support, etc.

■ Access to learning resources, whether the instruction itself or supporting resources, must be thoroughly planned. It also requires continuous consultation with, or badgering of the teaching staff to cooperate and contribute to the resources.

■ Ready and timely access to a wide range of relevant information resources is a key element of the client's learning experience

■ It is imperative that library and information services assess their users' needs, and continually monitor and review their provision to ensure as close a match as possible between student needs and the library and information services offered to meet them.

■ The more important distance learning is to the institution, the greater the potential for library and information centre involvement in the program.

■ There appears to be a general lack of understanding amongst faculty and teaching staff of how librarians can assist with instructional design and curriculum development. As a result, librarians are frequently left out of the distance

education planning process and have to be assertive to make the stakeholders aware of the library's potential role in course development and delivery.

Advantages of our Edtranet/Professional e-Resource Centre:

- Facilitates knowledge sharing. All libraries in our network can have access to this resource which in turn increases their capacity to deliver information to their clients electronically and timely
- Automatically alerts users about current information. Any registered user of this Resource Centre who advises us of their particular interests will be electronically notified immediately new resources are added in relation to their special interests
- The strategic imperative of managing our knowledge resources; Our Resource Centre, makes the AIPM intranet site productive, efficient and cost effective. It also assists in meeting our obligations as network members in sharing information
- Thousands of dollars saved each year on management costs and the costs involved in producing hard copies of pre and post course readings then posting them out
- Course participants and other patrons have immediate access to current teaching and learning support materials and at times and places most convenient to them
- We can store learning and curriculum materials in more than one folder without duplication
- No Web expertise is required to upload items onto the Resource Centre, e.g. no knowledge of HTML is required
- Information can be captured in a variety of formats, materials can be produced in a variety of formats and no re-formatting is required to upload into the Resource Centre
- Library and teaching staff can upload information from anywhere and make it available immediately to course participants thus saving time and other production costs.
- Compliance with copyright regulations is guaranteed and there is no need to keep manual records

Postscript:

> Those libraries and information centres that can provide an effective support structure for distance learning programs, successfully market their services within the institution, and align themselves with faculty and administrators will be able to achieve a degree of recognition of their value in the new electronic environment. Those libraries and information centres that assume a less-active role may find that they lack the resources and finances to adequately serve their remote and distance learners. (*Alexander L. Slade University of Victoria 2001*)

The community must exist within a world of knowledge. Jobs are changing. The world has grown through an agricultural age through the industrial age, passed through a service age and has entered the knowledge age. The jobs of the future will require strong knowledge-based skills. Police and Public safety professionals are not exempt from this.

The police and public safety organizations must provide comprehensive linkage to the information and knowledge-based world for its employees. Access to the technology of

information and knowledge must begin at pre-school and extend through retirement. All aspects of empowering an organisations' human resources must include consideration for the rapidly evolution of information technology.

Librarians are teachers not just gatekeepers.
The human factor is still important to libraries and those who use them. Library staff can help the overloaded information user by helping them select and evaluate material. Electronic tools can assist us in doing that; the tools will become just tools, not the focus. As teachers, we will need to participate throughout the educational continuum to develop the information fluency of students.