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**Paper: ‘Quality’ Stream**

**TITLE:**

Principles and Guidelines for Australian higher education libraries: capturing value.

**ABSTRACT:**

Reflecting on their time at university through an affinity survey, many alumni from Monash University reported affinity with their university library. Their Library! What makes that connection so strong? Aligning with institutional priorities and higher education standards, academic librarians have long partnered with faculties and divisions, conferred with research centres and liaised with student groups to augment university outcomes. However, tools for crystallising Library value are less advanced. In this paper, a new framework, *Principles and Guidelines for Australian higher education libraries (2016)*, is introduced. Its purpose is to describe and assess the contribution of libraries to academic and research endeavour. It articulates Library value through major strategic priorities, each with high-level value statements or Principles and a suite of associated Guidelines. The framework marks a new generation of Library value and impact tools. Coupling the framework with associated performance indicators, library directors and stakeholders can be better informed of library value.

**KEYWORDS:**

academic libraries  
quality framework  
value and impact

**INTRODUCTION**

Australia’s academic libraries continually evolve and transform within dynamic university environments, driven by profound disruption to education and research (Ernst & Young, 2012); innovations in scholarly communications (Kramer & Bosman, 2016) and online learning (Davies, Mullan, & Feldman, 2017); changing entry capabilities of students (Beetham, McGill, & Littlejohn, 2009) and the imperative to build graduate employability skills (Towlson & Rush, 2013). In times of such rapid progress in libraries, the profession’s core business of making information accessible is realised in new ways, with discovery platforms and learning programs to improve students’ navigation and use of information, extending to include students’ ability to create and disseminate information in today’s digital environments. Unlimited demands on the limited resources of libraries make evidence-based decision making critical.

To focus strategic visioning, improve operational efficiency and consolidate contributions to the goals of their organisation, libraries are shifting their approach to quality, away from gathering discrete activity and facilities data to evidencing their wider performance. They are investigating statistical associations and building metrics clusters to convey the value they contribute to the University and their impact on education, research, student engagement and satisfaction.

Libraries working in isolation on this challenging transition is unproductive. The Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL), keen to respond via its core mission - to enhance the value and capacity of Australian university libraries - undertook to develop a useful performance framework appropriate to the Australian context. This paper introduces CAUL’s *Principles and Guidelines for Australian higher education libraries (2016)*, a key element of the Council’s response.

## QUALITY – THE STATUS QUO:

Libraries' traditional approach to quality has been to benchmark with peers on a national level – comparing like with like; making comparisons across a variety of library services, library information skills programs and key resource budgets. These datasets serve to pinpoint the individual ranking of libraries in relation to their benchmark partners - libraries located in institutions with similar demographics. Comparisons across datasets note key gaps or deficiencies which then become the focus for directing a Library's development priorities.

This traditional approach to continuous improvement through benchmarking has been underpinned since 1969 by a centralised service of annual data collation and dissemination by CAUL in partnership with the Council of New Zealand University Librarians (CONZUL). Referred to as the CAUL/CONZUL Statistics, this longitudinal dataset has proved an invaluable business tool for library directors as they transformed libraries from primarily centres for collecting, curating and accessing information, into providers of high-demand learning environments, expert skill-development programs, research data management platforms and invaluable scholarly and special collections.

Since the inception of the profession, library directors' proactive approach to change has been achieved through leveraging a culture of professional collaboration (Nfila, R.B. & Darko-Ampem, K., (2002). Such initiatives include: collaborative cataloguing (centralisation reducing duplicated effort); cooperative lending schemes (sharing the purchase of worldwide knowledge); consortial purchasing (negotiating license deals and access conditions); and collective capability building of staff (posting free, open learning programs online for the profession and the community to access and learn, way before MOOCs and SPOCs) The most recent collaboration is a major initiative – building understanding and competence in new library analytics and creating a suitable framework for outlining and evaluating the role of contemporary libraries in Australian universities.

### **Qualipedia – a corpus of quality sources used by Australian academic libraries:**

A wide range of tools are currently being utilised by academic libraries to drive quality improvement, strategic planning, benchmarking and value analysis. These include:

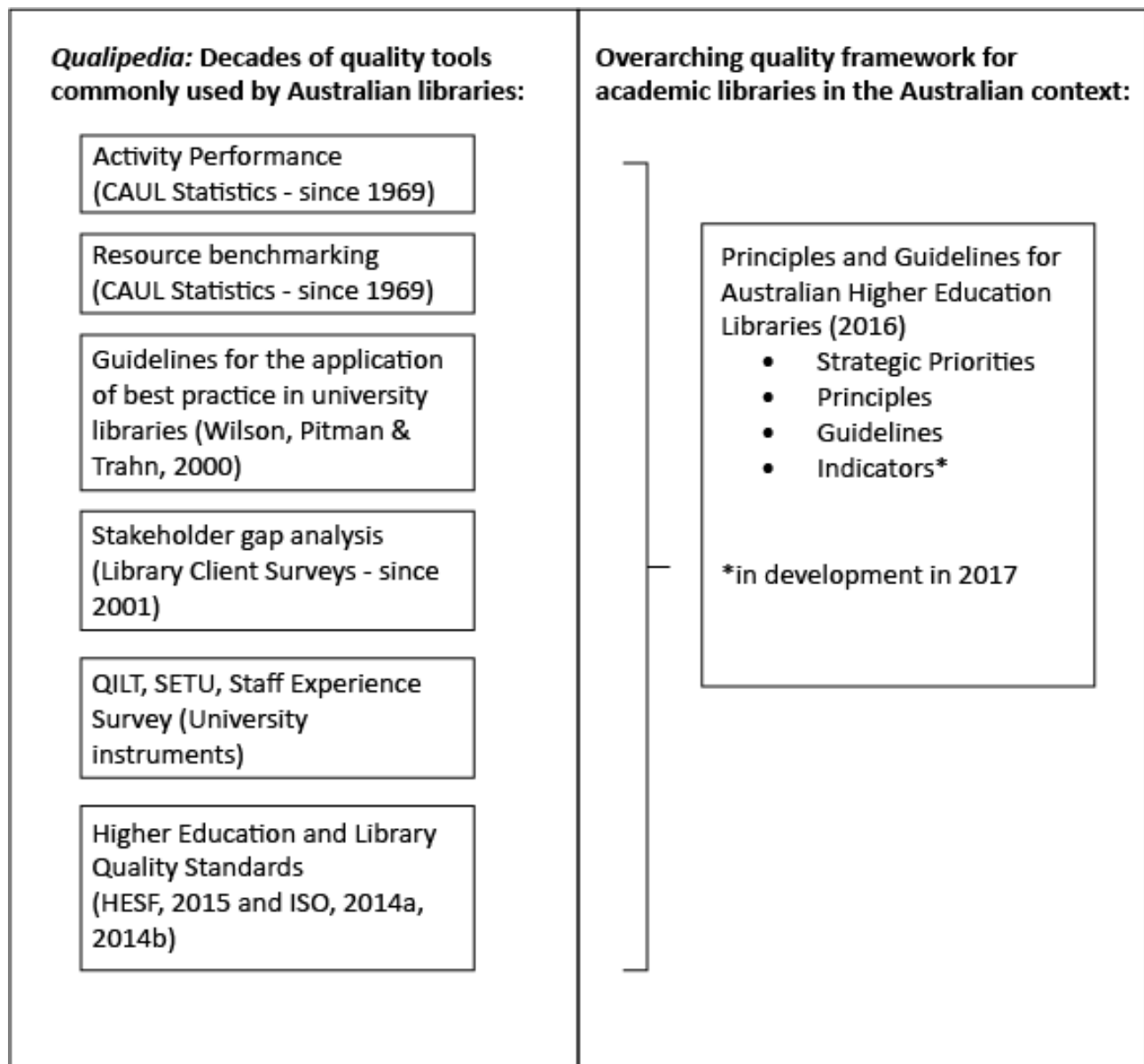
- *Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT)* – in particular the results of the Student Experience Survey and the Graduate Satisfaction Survey. Some Libraries are partnering with university planning and statistics to further interrogate data, such as the relationships between student success and library experience
- *Student Evaluation of Teaching and Units (SETU)* – unit-specific student feedback on key aspects including a question relating to learning resources
- *Library Client Survey* (administered by Insync Surveys Pty Ltd) – provides students with a voice to express their level of satisfaction with Australian university library services, spaces, technologies and staff. Results are ranked, Australia-wide and longitudinal and cohort analyses are available. Questions in the survey are maturing as library value becomes prominent and new value relationships are being identified.
- *Staff Experience Survey* – analysis of staff engagement with their university, segmented by Faculty/Division
- *CAUL/CONZUL Statistics* <http://www.caul.edu.au/caul-programs/caul-statistics>
- *International Organization for Standardization (ISO) Standards* relating to academic library performance and impact.

International library associations, including The American Library Association's higher education division, the Association of College & Research Libraries [ACRL], (2011) and the Society of College, National and University Libraries [SCONUL], (2017) representing all the UK and Ireland's university libraries, have developed quality standards and statements of library value appropriate to their context. These tools have varied levels of applicability and are not commonly used for quality activities in Australian higher education libraries.

The tool that's missing for Australia and New Zealand is an umbrella framework that 'paints a picture' of academic libraries, mirroring the work they currently undertake. This tool needs to use the lexicon that resonates with Australian and New Zealand universities embracing the 21st Century, a lexicon that aptly describes education and research goals, as students and scholars aim for success in the unknown Professions of the Future (Salt, 2017).

The nexus between the CAUL Principles and Guidelines framework and the various elements of the *Qualipedia* are outlined in Table 1.

*Table 1: Evolution of library quality programs, from activity and satisfaction datasets and standards to a strategic Australian framework of quality priorities.*



A number of the longstanding quality tools will continue to be sources of evidence, providing measures of impact and value for the Indicators in the Principles and Guidelines framework.

## DEVELOPING THE FRAMEWORK:

With CAUL's endorsement, a project was established to identify the key strategic priorities for Australian academic libraries along with a set of widely-held principles and associated guidelines. Together, these three elements can articulate a Library's value and impact on the learning, teaching and research endeavours of the University.

Individual interviews were conducted with key leaders in affiliated library and higher education organisations, university librarians, and senior university staff. These were drawn from institutions Australia-wide. In addition, an extensive literature search was undertaken and involved in-depth consideration of contemporary frameworks and standards. This search investigated:

- Commonwealth of Australia *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015*
- Canadian Library Association *Guidelines of practice for school library learning commons*
- Association of College and Research Libraries [ACRL] *Standards for libraries in higher education 2011*
- ACRL *Assessment in Action Program 2012*
- International Organization for Standardization [ISO] 2014
  - ISO 11620:2014: *Information and documentation: Library performance indicators*
  - ISO 16439:2014: *Information and documentation: Methods and procedures for assessing the impact of libraries*

## DELIVERING THE FRAMEWORK:

In constructing the quality framework, it was important to create a self-explanatory tool which libraries could use independently. The three critical elements were joined by a fourth – Indicators – with the four elements defined as follows:

- STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: Isolating and describing key **strategic priorities** shared by academic libraries in Australia and New Zealand and relevant to parent organisations  
e.g. *Strategic Priority 3: Growing a dynamic, sustainable and accountable organisation*
- PRINCIPLES: For each strategic priority, identifying core **principles** or high level value statements which are fundamental to that priority and define its essential essence  
e.g. *Principle 3.1: The library is effective, sustainable and accountable, engaged with and responding to the university's needs*
- GUIDELINES: For each principle, drawing out **guidelines** which articulate different dimensions of a principle and serve as suggested parameters or recommended requirements  
e.g. *Guideline 3.1.2: The Library's policies practices and processes are designed to accommodate stakeholder diversity*
- INDICATORS: For each guideline, a diverse bank of **indicators** which evidence the attainment of the associated guideline, contributed by participating libraries. A diversity of indicators reflects the strategic initiatives driving different universities; align with the culture, organisational context and capacity of the library.

The resulting framework consists of a contemporary set of good practice Principles and associated Guidelines against core Strategic Priorities which fully align with key university priorities: learning, teaching and research outcomes; the creation of new knowledge; and sustainable, effective university asset management.

The Principles and Guidelines framework also maps to the appropriate Higher Education Standards Framework (2015). Principle 3.1 and Guideline 3.1.2 map to HESF Standard 3.1 *Learning Resources and Educational Support*.

*Table 2: Alignment between the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) (2015) and Principles and Guidelines for Australian higher education libraries (2016)*

Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) (2015)		Principles and Guidelines for Australian higher education libraries (2016)	
3.3.4	<p><b>Learning Resources and Educational Support</b></p> <p>Students have access to learning support services that are consistent with the requirements of their course of study, their mode of study and the learning needs of student cohorts, including arrangements for supporting and maintaining contact with students who are off campus</p>	1.3.2	All students have access to library learning programs and activities consistent with the requirements of their course of study, their mode of study and the learning needs
3.2.5	<p><b>Staffing</b></p> <p>Teaching staff are accessible to students seeking individual assistance with their studies, at a level consistent with the learning needs of the student cohort</p>	1.3.6	Library staff are accessible to students seeking individual assistance with their studies
2.1.3	<p><b>Facilities and Infrastructure</b></p> <p>The learning environment, whether physical, virtual or blended, and associated learning activities support academic interactions among students outside of formal teaching.</p>	1.4.2	The library's learning environment, whether physical or virtual, and associated learning activities support academic interactions among students outside of formal teaching
4.1.3	<p><b>Research</b></p> <p>A system for accurate and up-to-date recording of the research outputs of staff and research students is maintained.</p>	2.3.2	The library has and maintains a system for accurate and up-to-date recording of the research outputs of staff and research students
2.2.1	<p><b>Diversity and Equity</b></p> <p>Institutional policies, practices and approaches to teaching and learning are designed to accommodate student diversity, including the under-representation and/or disadvantage experienced by identified groups, and create equivalent opportunities for academic success regardless of students' backgrounds.</p>	3.1.2	The library's policies, practices and processes are designed to accommodate stakeholder diversity

## IMPLEMENTATION: ROLLING OUT THE FRAMEWORK

Adopting the Principles and Guidelines across Australian and New Zealand libraries is a strategic choice for each library – there's no mandatory requirement, no keeping a tally of adopters. This approach recognises the challenges in gaining members' full consensus on how best to convey value to our organisations and what value means in the context of different universities.

As adoption is voluntary and the terrain is complex, libraries need to independently articulate their achievement of the Principles and Guidelines. Work has commenced in a few libraries and these indicators are being shared with the sector as a bank of sample Indicators. The indicators will be fluid and flexible, recognising that each university has a unique culture. Strategic priorities vary and tactics for achieving key goals are often institution-specific. Faculty relationships with library staff vary, influencing a library's potential to contribute to education, research, student engagement and satisfaction outcomes. Library levels of resourcing, staff expertise, library building investment and technological innovation also impact the promises that they can realistically deliver.

The longer term aim is to develop maturity indicators for the key Guidelines, where a library's potential value and impact can transition through a number of stages, described by three levels of library development: Emerging: Evolving: Leading.

Table 3 provides an example of three-stage maturity indicators for Guideline 1.1.3 - *Stakeholder feedback and evidence inform planning, and help to shape library strategy*.

Table 3: Sample maturity indicators: Emerging, Evolving and Leading.

### STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: Strengthening learning, teaching and research outcomes

PRINCIPLE	GUIDELINES	SAMPLE INDICATORS		
		EMERGING	EVOLVING	LEADING
<b>Principle 1.1</b> The library understands, anticipates and responds to the university's diverse stakeholders and their information needs	<b>Guideline 1.1.3</b> Stakeholder feedback and evidence inform planning, and help to shape library strategy	Stakeholder feedback and evidence is collected	Stakeholder feedback and evidence is collected, collated, analysed and emerging issues identified	Emerging issues data from stakeholder feedback is used to shape action plans that address the issues identified.  Feedback on action plans is provided to stakeholders

Source: Council of Australian University Librarians (2016, 6)

A longer-term goal is to nurture a culture of evidence-based thinking and communication across Australia and New Zealand, with library staff being active contributors to evidence-based decision making with peers and cross-University colleagues. Furthermore, growing Library staff capability in identifying performance and satisfaction indicators aligned with university measures will focus Library strategic priorities on organisational concerns. Our best outcomes will derive from swiftly-evolving and innovative Library contributions to the University's initiatives in meeting the challenges of our turbulent world.

## CONCLUSION:

Two significant challenges accompany the launch of the Principles and Guidelines framework:

- The development of performance indicators, including rigorous 3-stage maturity indicators, is an ongoing task. A call for crowd-sourced Indicators has not been sufficiently effective so far. A recently formed Value and Impact Community of Practice, initiated by CAUL's Quality and

Assessment Advisory Committee, holds promise. In the early forming and norming stage of the new Community of Practice, members are actively contributing to a shared understanding of library value and are actively discussing solutions to wide-ranging issues raised by members. The Community members recently committed to drafting a suite of Indicators, one Principle and Guideline at a time. They will adopt the approach outlined by Oakleaf (2010, p. 12) who encourages academic libraries to align outcomes with institutional outcomes that relate to “student enrollment (sic), student retention and graduation rates, student success, student achievement, student learning, student engagement, faculty research productivity, faculty teaching, service, and overarching institutional quality”.

- Library staff capability building is required in a number of quality areas. As libraries focus on competently conveying their value, library staff development programs are required in business analytics and storytelling - in particular, capabilities relating to understanding data, visualising and analysing data and communicating impact. (ISO, 2014-b)

New opportunities are also available:

- Some Australian academic libraries are working closely with university statistics experts to take a deeper dive into institutionally collected data, particularly elements within Quality in Learning and Teaching (QILT) – Student Experience and Graduate Satisfaction. This investigation will explore potential relationships between a selection of student/graduate outcomes and students’ and graduates’ experience in relation to their academic library.

Our centre of attention are the graduates of tomorrow: we constantly question our approaches and the impact we have on students’ education and academics’ research and teaching; ensuring library experiences exceed expectations and making certain the library’s contribution is rated the highest possible value. Our secret goal is keeping *the Library* at the very top of our Alumni’s Affinity List!

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Sue Owen leads Monash University Library's strategic planning and development, executive communications, community engagement and library corporate services: finance, human resources and administration, facilities management, external relations and alumni. Sue joined Monash University Library in 2016, following extensive academic library experience at Deakin University, the University of New South Wales and the University of Tasmania. Sue has also held various roles in government, non-government and corporate research libraries and undertaken library and training consultancies. She has held office in the Australian Library and Information Association, the Council of Australian University Librarians and has won several information sector awards.

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Barbara has been a leader of professional activities and library groups in Australia. She is a member of the Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL) and the CAUL Quality and Assessment Advisory Committee. She has also been Director of the Australian Academic and Research Libraries Network, the Convenor of the Librarians Group of the Regional Universities Network and the Queensland Libraries Office of Cooperation.