

Putting a face to a name: promoting your health library at a medical conference

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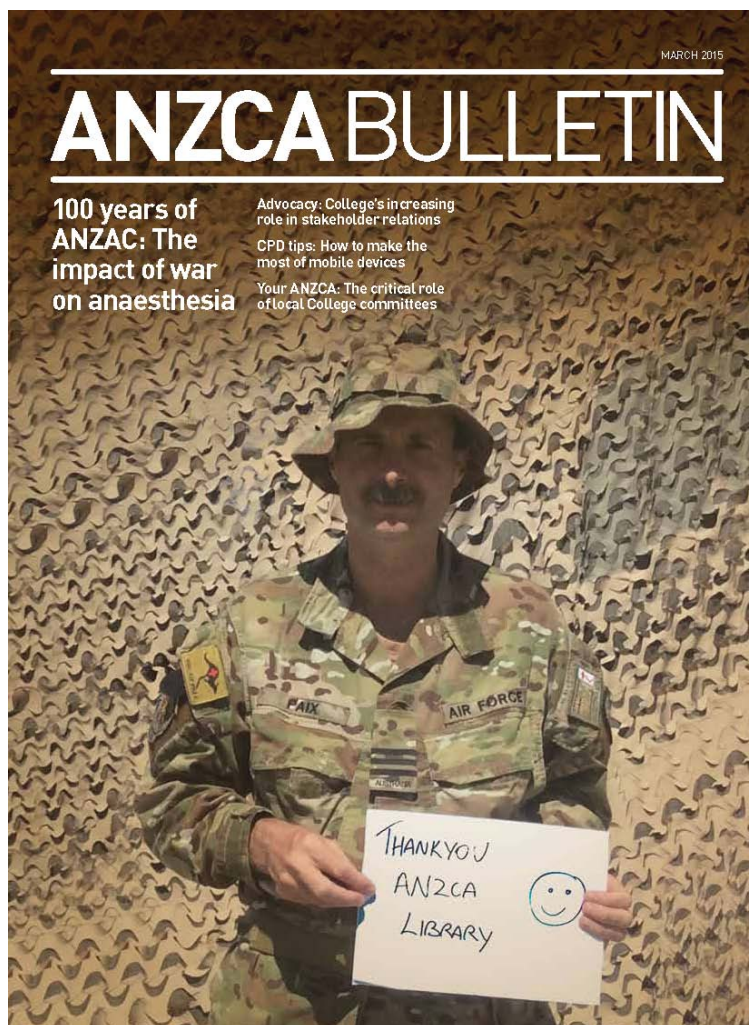
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The Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA) Library provides a full range of services and resources to anaesthetist fellows and trainees located throughout the Australia and New Zealand region, as well as to the College staff who support them. This inevitably brings with it the challenges of providing and promoting the library to nearly 7000 remote and specialist users in an almost entirely online environment.

Following a full review of services in 2014, the decision was made by ANZCA Library staff to focus on the review's recommendations around technology solutions, which sought to integrate and embed resources to improve fellow and trainee awareness of, engagement with and experience using the library. Whilst this approach has proved successful, with the online library usage and profile continuing to increase, it was felt that in order to fully engage with remote users, a multi-faceted approach, not necessarily technology-based, was also required. This resulted in library staff deciding to participate in those College events that facilitated direct contact with our users.

This article focuses on the impact of the library being involved with the College's Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM) and how our participation in this conference has increased engagement between the library and its users, including fellows and trainees, other College staff, and also with publishers and library product providers.

Within the ANZCA organisational structure, the ANZCA Library forms part of Knowledge Resources, which sits in the Fellowship Affairs Unit, enjoying the full support of the Fellowship Affairs general manager, who has always championed the library as a College asset. With her support and assistance, the ANZCA Library has been gradually breaking out of the 'traditional' niche library shell – at a time when many similar libraries are contracting both in terms of staff and services offered – by integrating and embedding services and resources across the College membership and the workplace. One of the most visible and successful avenues has been promoting the library at the ANZCA Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM).



ANZCA Bulletin with Dr Bruce Paix on the cover

A brief interlude: the impact of the library

There isn't much opportunity to sit down during a five day conference, however library staff usually ensure that they attend a few significant presentations, often for projects for which they have provided information and resources. It is a satisfying experience to see the impact of library resources and services in fellow presentations at the ASM. In March 2015, one of our fellows stationed in Afghanistan with NATO, Wing Commander Dr Bruce Paix, wrote a front page article for the quarterly ANZCA magazine, highlighting the benefits of using the library in a remote location. Library staff only became aware of the article a few days prior to publication, so with no additional effort from the library required, Dr Paix has become our model library champion! Even though he was an enthusiastic and regular user of the library, no one within the library had actually met him, so we made the decision to attend his conference presentation on massive haemorrhage in combat. Though still in shock after seeing the challenges he was confronted with in Afghanistan, it was great to put a face to a name and chat further about the impact of the library on his practice. Dr Paix marvelled about how, despite his remoteness from the College, in extreme conditions, and requiring quite unique and current information – sometimes urgently – that a combination of technology and library expertise allowed any barriers to completely disappear. His article, his passionate word-of-mouth promotion to colleagues around the world (and his lovely Christmas hampers!) reminds us of the impact of our work in health libraries.

ANZCA Lounge



The ASM is a yearly conference attended by up to 2000 fellows and trainees over five days for research presentations and workshops. The 'ANZCA Lounge' is set up in the health care industry trade display area and staffed by ANZCA personnel and volunteer anaesthetists involved in ANZCA committees. It provides a comfortable environment for attendees to speak with staff from such areas as the Education Unit, the Training, Assessment and Accreditation Unit and the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Unit.

Throughout the planning process and during the long hours spent working side-by-side, our participation in the ASM has provided the opportunity for the library to forge stronger links with these College departments. We've been able to promote our educational resources and work on integrating them further into the training and continuing professional development programs.

Working closely with us over the five days of the ASM, members of these departments became more aware of the wide range and quality of services that the library offers, and how these can support their own work. For example, at the 2016 ASM, we opportunely met with the curriculum working group, and

subsequent to this, library staff developed a new module on literature searching and critical appraisal for the training program used by fellows as part of their CPD.

We have also built a relationship with the Education Unit to integrate library resources into the College's learning management system. The College's New Zealand office was so impressed by the level of engagement of library staff at the ASM, it led to us providing a similar presence at the smaller NZ ASM. This face-to-face interaction has been recognised by department heads and stakeholder fellows with an increasing number of invitations for the library to present at regular committee meetings to gain feedback and facilitate engagement.

ANZCA Lounge display



One recommendation from the 2014 library review, which involved a lot of work and lateral thinking, was the investigation of mutual benefit with publishers. As with all libraries, every year the increasing resource costs, particularly for online resources, become harder to meet and justify, so the ANZCA Library has been negotiating mutual benefits for both parties. We are working with publishers to make use of their expert product knowledge (as well as save on our own staff time) by obtaining customised webinars, training videos and promotional material to embed into our users' online environment.

Representatives from various publishers have taken the opportunity offered to them to attend the ANZCA Lounge at ASMs, free-of-cost, to promote their products and interact directly with our library users. This direct engagement with their users can be invaluable for the publisher as they gain a greater understanding of their needs and requirements. In 2017, one publisher offered post-ASM training to any interested users, while another promoted their new app. In the latter example, the new app was already proving popular but once the ANZCA president was photographed and tweeted signing up for it, the response was overwhelming. Library staff and the company rep registered more than forty ANZCA fellows and trainees for the app in a four hour period at the ASM!

Publishers can also report on their involvement at a medical conference, which would normally be a very costly endeavour as an independent exhibitor, to their upper management. Overall, the mutual benefit discussions with publishers at days such as this have made our relationships with them even more productive, critical and enjoyable.

Publisher freebies



While we like to think that fellows and trainees are lining up to meet their librarian, like any conference, often it is the 'freebies' that get their attention first. Just like librarians and free brightly coloured sticky notes, fluorescent yellow 'syringe' pens are a natural favourite for anaesthetists. Each year we contact all our publishers for promotional material and freebies to jazz up the stand and provide handy information for library users to take away with them. We obtain boxes of material and often have very little left over at the end. Quick reference cards and any neat little brochures can also assist to highlight the many resources that library users may not be familiar with.

As soon as a doctor picks up a pen or sticky note pad, it gives library staff an opportunity to ask them about what library resources they have used, or indeed whether they even use the library at all. One response that is fortunately declining is 'I don't use the ANZCA Library – it is based in Melbourne, and I live in [insert any place outside of Melbourne!]'. So begins the spiel into the online nature of the library, providing access to any fellow or trainee 24/7, anywhere with an internet connection.

Busy at the ANZCA Lounge



The library and CPD unit are by far the busiest departments at the ANZCA Lounge, as services are explained and the many resources promoted. Over the years, library staff have spoken to hundreds of doctors during the ASM and without fail, every one of them has learnt something new about the library – whether it was the drug database they didn't know they could access on their mobile device, or the e-book collections that come with high quality procedural videos. Questions and discussions that would never be initiated via email, arise naturally in conversation. Feedback and recommendations are given to the library staff, and fellows and trainees walk away with a greater understanding about the library that could never be achieved by a website/email/form/phone call, no matter how dynamic. In 2017 alone, the library manager walked away with over twenty five action items to follow up and performed live 'surgery' on one of the LibGuides!

With these kinds of interactions, the value of the College to the fellows and trainees increases, thereby increasing the value of the library, thereby increasing the value to the publisher as well. Some fellows have even claimed that learning about the library justified their conference attendance and/or their College fees! Often it is the only chance that College and library staff and fellows ever have of meeting face-to-face. This kind of contact is invaluable if we are to maintain a service that continues to anticipate and meet ANZCA fellow and trainee needs.

Ultimately, stepping out of the library and into the library users' world, in this case, a medical conference, has personalised our online library service. Conference participation provides us with the opportunity to understand our users' needs and challenges, and enables invaluable human interaction and engagement.