



case study

Edith Cowan University: bibliotheca solutions allow librarians to focus on university goals of student success and research





Edith Cowan University serves 27,000 undergraduate and post-graduate students at three campuses in Western Australia. A young university, Edith Cowan is committed to providing students with an industry-relevant, world-class education and furthering real-world research that improves the lives of those in Western Australia and beyond. The University was established in 1991 and has since earned numerous awards and five-star ratings for teaching quality, overall educational experience and skills development.

RFID is a game changer

The Edith Cowan University Library on the Joondalup campus was built in 2006 and opened to the public in January of 2007. The library is a stunning piece of modern architecture spanning four floors which offers technology labs, open study space and a law library in addition to its printed collection.

In 2012, the entire library system converted its collection to RFID technology. With RFID becoming more common in Australia,

Constance Wiebrands, University Librarian, says the decision to switch was a simple one. "The idea was to free up our staff to do things other than lending and returning, and make the whole process of borrowing materials as easy on our students as possible," she says.

RFID technology makes it possible for students to check out several items at once by placing a stack of materials in the bibliotheca selfCheck™ kiosk. There is no need to manually scan individual barcodes, a tedious, and often frustrating experience.

"Before we converted to RFID, students often had trouble checking out their own materials. Sometimes the barcodes weren't laid out correctly, sometimes the students just got it wrong. Before we converted, our selfCheck usage was 30%-40% of all of our loans. Now it's up to 90%," says Wiebrands.

Librarians: so much more than circ desk staff

Like many academic libraries in Australia, Edith Cowan offers research data management services. "The University is focused on research;

getting more research students, getting researchers in, and getting more research grants. To do that, we need the librarians doing different work. We don't want librarians sitting there waiting for students to ask for help. We want librarians out in the schools, out with the researchers," says Wiebrands.

With many of the University's librarians engaged in supporting teaching and learning and research, the majority of the staff inside the campuses' libraries are library technicians. Wiebrands is quick to point out that their skills go far beyond lending and returning materials.

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“Our staff can help students find materials and learn how to correctly reference those materials for their assignments. If the staff is not busy with mundane tasks like checking items in and out, they are able to have quality interactions with the students and assist them in a substantive way. The human interaction is the real value they can offer. By using technology to assist with the run of the mill tasks, we free up our staff to do the things that can only be done by a human being.”

smartShelf™ extends the use of RFID

The benefits of RFID technology extend beyond reducing the time required for students to borrow materials at selfCheck. The process for returning and re-shelving materials is simplified and automated as well.

Wiebrands considered installing a bibliotheca flex AMH™ system to handle returns and sorting. The modular, conveyor belt system automatically checks in materials and sorts them for easy re-shelving. Though the system is a life-saver for large libraries, Wiebrands wasn't sure that the University's library had adequate returns to justify the expense. She found the solution Edith Cowen needed in the smaller smartShelf solution.

[Learn more about intelligent returns + smartShelf](#)

Edith Cowan keeps a number of resources in their high-use collection area. These items, including textbooks and other in-demand materials, are only available for students to borrow on a three-hour basis. Returning and re-shelving items so often and so quickly poses a serious burden for library staff. The smartShelf eliminates this problem by automatically checking materials into the collection as soon as they've been placed on the shelves. The shelves themselves act as storage for these high-demand items. Allowing students to easily find the materials they are looking for, borrow at a nearby selfCheck and return at the smartShelf without requiring assistance from library staff.

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shelf, and it's returned and available for the next student. We'd like to put the smartShelf in other campuses to make it easier for all students.”

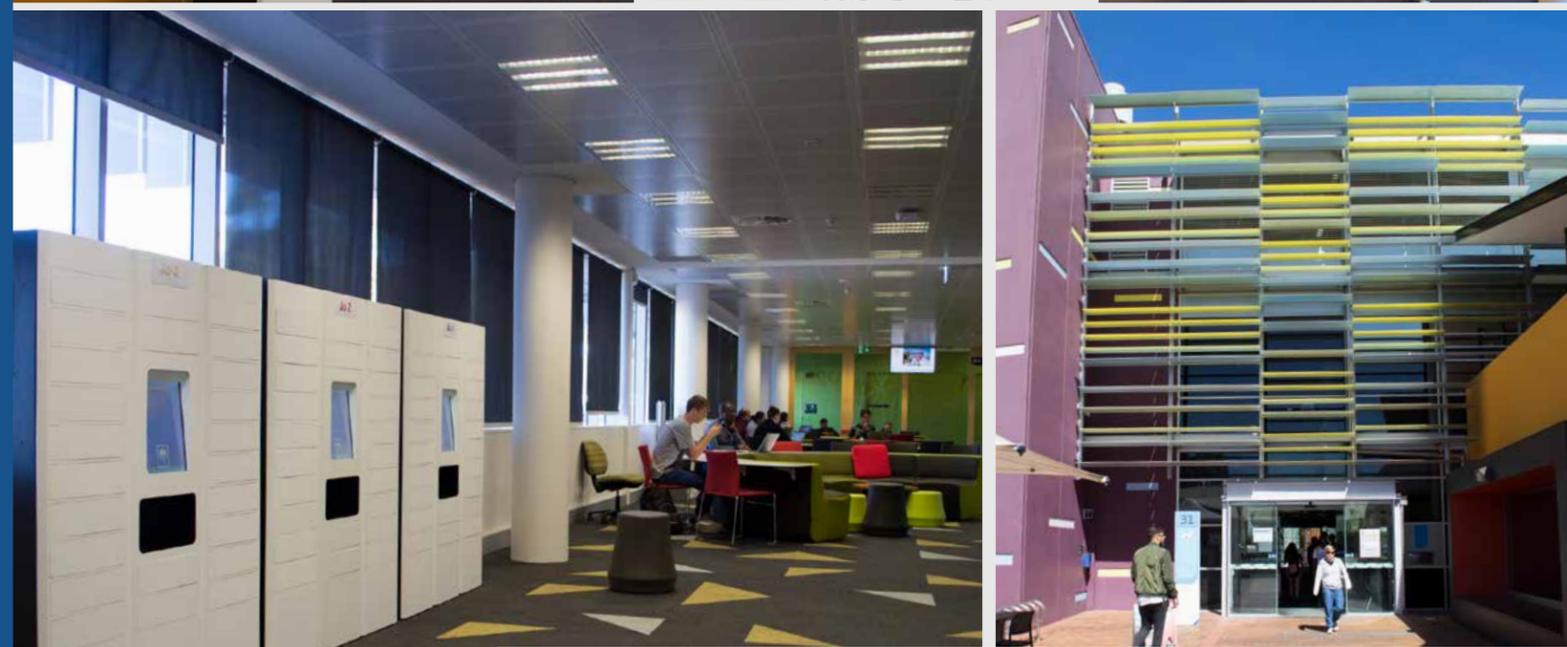
Going 24/7 with the help of remoteLockers

Last year, the Joondalup campus library opened up to students 24 hours a day. The library wanted to make the technology labs and study areas available to students at any hour but struggled with how to staff the library overnight.

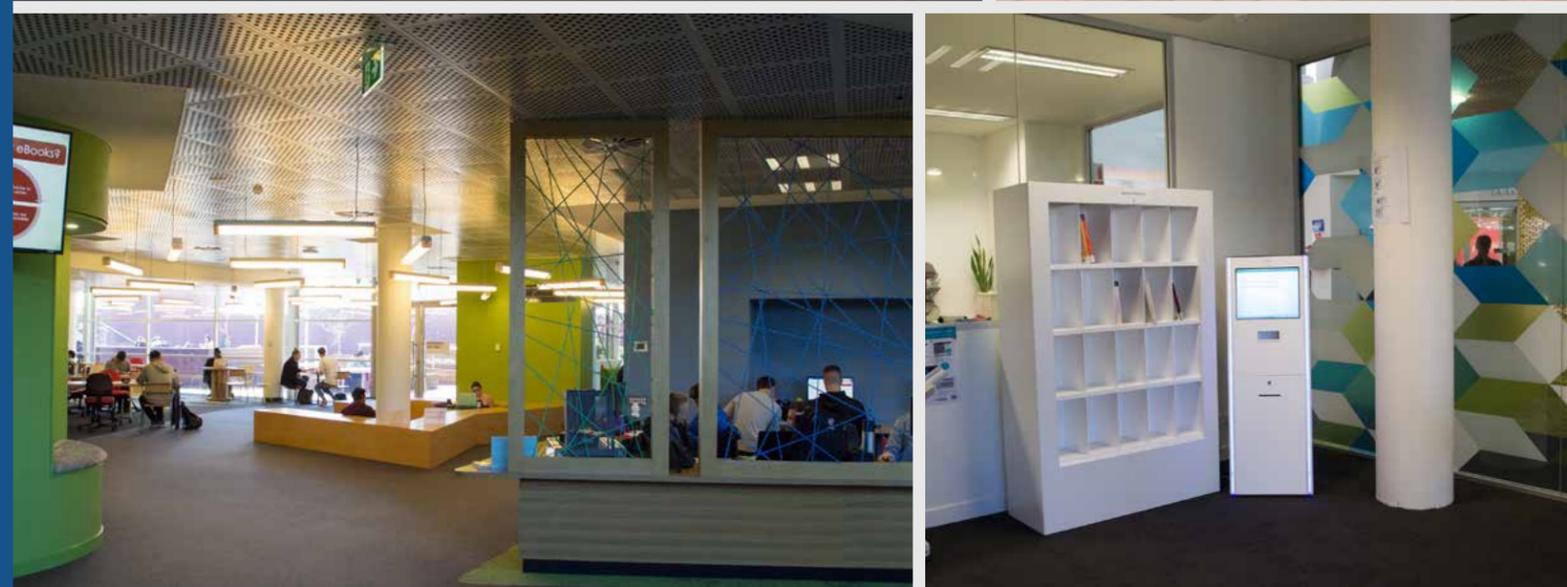
The solution they settled on was closing the top two floors of the library (the collections area and the administrative offices) and allowing students access to only the first two floors after hours. By installing remoteLockers on the first floor, the library provides students with after-hours access to materials that they have reserved without the library needing to provide staff to supervise the collection floor. Students simply visit the lockers, scan their cards, and retrieve their materials.

The remoteLockers are in constant use, and the University hopes to expand the number of lockers available.

[Read more about remoteLocker.](#)



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In the age of digital, print collections remain a mainstay of academic libraries

Edith Cowan University is committed to staying at the forefront of technology and research. Like many other academic institutions, the University is taking advantage of everything that the world of digital publishing has to offer. Even so, Wiebrands understands that many resources do not translate well from print to electronic format. She says, "Especially in fine arts and photography, the print book is better. We have a very good collection of fine art materials in print, and we'll continue to circulate these items in the future. Some people wonder why we'd pay for technology and machinery to handle paper books when everything is turning towards digital content. But there are still 300,000 paper books that need to be circulated."

When it comes to saving time and energy, the question is why not?

To complement the existing RFID technology, Edith Cowan University installed remoteLockers and the smartShelf in June of 2017. The library is already seeing the benefits. Now that lending and returning is handled primarily through technology,

library staff is available to help students research their assignments, use software such as EndNote and Excel, and maintain an up-to-date catalogue of materials.

"My question is 'Why wouldn't you use the latest available technology to help your staff and students?' It's been very successful for us," says Wiebrands. The bibliotheca solutions have proven so valuable that the University is looking for ways to include the remoteLockers and smartShelves at its other campus locations.

The University has a new Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Education, Professor Angela Hill, and Wiebrands expects the role of librarians at Edith Cowan to continue to evolve under her leadership. "She's really changing the way we approach offering classes. We need to continue to free up librarians to develop course materials, teach, and help students."



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