

Diane L Velasquez, PhD
Program Director – Information Management
University of South Australia
School of Information Technology & Mathematical Sciences
GPO Box 2470
Mail Drop MLK 06
Adelaide, SA 5016
08 8302 5101
0402 209 141
Diane.Velasquez@unisa.edu.au

Phase Five: An Assessment, Evaluation, and Comparison of Public Library Websites in Australia and Canada

This paper will present the fifth phase of information regarding the assessment and evaluation of public library websites in Australia and Canada. Public library web sites are the electronic representation of the library's branch. Many times these are not considered to be vital on the part of the library management and suffer from lack of attention (Velasquez, 2013). To that end, I have undertaken a project that is an evaluation of Australian and Canadian public library web sites from their most basic aspect. This is a replication of a U.S. study done by Bonnie Powers (2011) who looked at Pennsylvania web sites to determine if there was a basic level of service provided to patrons and clients. She found that most public library web sites in this particular state were lacking even the most basic information.

McMenemy (2012) did a study in Scotland in 2010 and looked at all 32 public library web sites to determine the usability of their sites. He found that only 9 per cent of the 32 Scottish public libraries had their own web domains and determined that those organisations without their own domain suffered from a "virtual identity problem" (McMenemy, 2012, p. 507). For some time in Australia many of the councils have had a stranglehold on the public libraries that they are responsible for and appear to dictate what the library management can and cannot do with their virtual branch.

The methodology of the study replicates Powers (2011) study with two additional questions regarding joint use of the facility. In order to expedite the study, I have had my project students assist in doing the research for the public libraries. I had 14 students who assisted with the Australian websites and 10 students who researched the Canadian websites. This enabled the research to help eliminate bias as Raward (2001) determined that doing the research with only one evaluator could occur. The students have examined a total of 726 public and community library websites. Each student examined a minimum of 25 public library web sites checking for basic information that a client would be looking for when scrolling their site. The websites are from all over Australia and Canada (except Quebec).

The results will include an assessment and evaluation of the Canadian and Australian sites. There will be some comparisons between the Canadian and Australian data to see if there are any similarities between what the top and bottom features are as well as anything else that stands out between the two countries public libraries.

References

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