



Novel Approach: Building a Research Culture Through a Book

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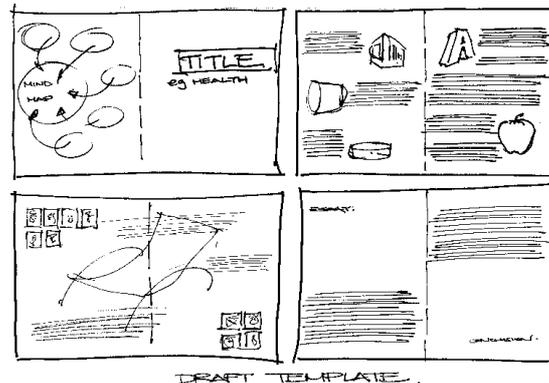
Otago Polytechnic is comprised of three faculties. The largest is a diverse grouping named the Faculty of Art and Technology. This contains eight schools: Architecture, Building and Civil Engineering; Art, Engineering; Fashion; Hairdressing; IT and Electrotechnology; Natural Resources; and Science and Veterinary Nursing. The faculty Research and Scholarship Committee (FATRSC) is charged with the promotion and propagation of research activities within the institution and externally.

We have avoided getting caught in semantic arguments of definitions of research. With a dual name of research and scholarship, the committee is attempting to value the acquisition of knowledge, extending boundaries, and the value of documenting what is accomplished. Across the faculty a wide range of activities are carried out from exploration of solar cells to ecological theory. Much effort has been placed in OP in creating a 'research culture'. Mentoring systems, research cafes and a research website have all helped. The main focus of bureaucratic activity though has been through the distribution of funds by application by the central and faculty research committees. There has been a pattern of domination of spending by a few established researchers but under spending of the budget. This year the FATRSC is putting much of its energies into a project intended to promote research on a number of levels.

It is intended that the product of this project be a book suitable for display in professional offices. It is hoped that this will raise the profile of OP research. Internally, it is hoped that the book will be seen as a celebration of the diverse activities that are undertaken, and encourage people to do more research. The 94 page book is scheduled for launch in February 2003.

The second benefit, and perhaps more important, is the process of producing the book. We see the synergies and communication this should generate as being critical to the success of developing a research culture. The book is to be separated into eight clusters, each based around a seed word (looking, space, lever, sustain, interact, change, embody and ___ware). These words were generated in workshops to attempt to cover the range of activities but purposely do not align with the schools.

There is an editor for each cluster who has the task of running workshops to generate the content for their cluster suitable for the book. A template is given, although they are free to deviate from this, and indeed the seed word. The FATRSC committee has identified people for each cluster but they are free to recruit (we are supplying food and drink). The 'body' cluster, for example, includes a sculptor, an architectural engineer, a fashion designer, three artists, an industrial designer, a computer scientist, an occupational therapist, a veterinarian and an ergonomic engineer. We believe that in addition to the book chapter (in itself a research output) the multidisciplinary approach will lead to other outcomes. The book is being compiled by a professional designer (who is a post grad art student) who sees much value in involving other students in the process. This is a process that we want to own, and to excite.



DRAFT TEMPLATE.

