Simple Pledge

Samuel Mann

Information Technology

Katie Ellwood

Marketing

Otago Polytechnic

smann, katiee@tekotago.ac.nz

Otago Polytechnic has set itself a goal of "every graduate may think and act as a sustainable practitioner by 2009". This goal is aimed at contributing to a better community, at producing graduates across the institution with relevant skills and values, and about working closely with industry to both identify and achieve sustainable practice in each discipline (Mann and Smith 2008).

The book, *A Simple Pledge: Otago Polytechnic's Journey Towards Sustainability* was formally launched on World Environment Day 2009. *Simple Pledge* has several external goals such as building credibility in industry, but its main value is in conveying the message of the institution's commitment to staff and students. As part of the required culture change we need to continually reinforce the message: "this the journey Otago Polytechnic is on, that means you, and yes you can". A big part of it is celebrating the successes that we've had in a way that is reachable for everyone.

The book is quite short, 32 pages and is deliberately optimistic in tone and style. This is a celebration of a journey. In another celebrative act, *Simple Pledge* was designed by two final year Communication Design students, Craig Scott and Simon Horner.

The book has four main elements. The right hand pages tell the narrative in words and pictures. Facing pages provide background on each aspect of the story. These articles cover the range of teaching, community outreach and operations. The images represent a range of activities our students, graduates and staff engage in- all working towards being sustainable practitioners. These images are overlain with diagrams of sustainable thinking – not obscuring the original, but hopefully giving the message that everything can be view through a lens of sustainability.

This structure – the threading, the multiple scales and the layering – should give some notion of sustainability themselves: every story has a back story, every image can be viewed with a sustainable lens (Blevis 2007).

The overprint imagery needed to convey the essence of sustainability in a few sketched lines. We needed to focus on the notion of sustainability itself rather than the underlying science. The message in these sketched diagrams is very important so, for example, the "Strong Sustainability" concentric circles was used, not the usual three overlapping circles" approach.

We also developed a simple version of the pledge. This is to prompt people to take note, take some ownership of the messages of the book, and hopefully some commitment. To date, more than 150 staff have signed this public pledge:

As a member of the Otago Polytechnic community, I pledge to become an ambassador for sustainable practice

The simple pledge – doing the right thing – obliges us to consider the social impact of the decisions we make across the board; be it in curriculum development, purchasing, charitable giving, providing student support services or developing community partnerships.

We have developed a framework which ensures that corporate social responsibility targets are set into our planning and review and make it our business to assess our impact on the society and environment in which we operate.

Mann, S. and K. Ellwood, Eds. (2009). A Simple Pledge. Towards Sustainable Practice, Otago Polytechnic. www.otagopolytechnic. ac.nz/ sustainability

Blevis, E. (2007). Sustainable Interaction Design: Invention and disposal, renewal and reuse. Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, San Jose, California, ACM. 4:503-512

Mann, S. and L. G. Smith (2008). Sustainable Practitioners. 21st Annual Conference of the National Advisory Committee on Computing Qualifications, Auckland NACCQ 158-168