

NEW
ACADEMIC
STREET
HEROES



"I don't think that there's one tough issue. I think it tends to be looking at a number of different things that are going on, so that you can continue trying to offer the same level of services to the students that you possibly can. That's what we're here for."

Stephen Gillespie
Associate Director, Library Resources
University Library & Student Success

nas.rmit.edu.au



The Swanston Library is one of the spaces most affected by the NAS project, and most in need of an upgrade. Stephen Gillespie has been involved since day one, back in 2012, when they were doing workshops with the architects, Lyons, to work out the types of spaces the new Swanston Library would need. It's not surprising though; he's been the Associate Director of Library Resources for 12 years.

The new Swanston Library is going to be fantastic, but naturally in order to get there, there has to be a period of disruption. The Library and its staff are one of the groups most affected and for the longest period. In preparation, they moved about 120 Library staff to five different locations across the University. They also had to move a whopping 120 thousand items to an external storage location. Stephen is quick to point out that those items can still be requested and still are being requested by students.

"We maintain a 24-hour delivery time, so a student can request it, if it's urgent, and we'll deliver it to them on the same day, but usually are happy that they can get it the next day. It's available for pick-up for use. And if it's being used multiple times we won't return it to the offsite storage, we'll keep it onsite." Stephen explains.

When asked about the disruption, Stephen plays down both his role and the impact, choosing instead to focus on students and the service that the Library provides.

"The disruptions have not really been for me personally. To a certain extent, the disruptions are more for the student because ultimately they're the biggest users of the University Library. So, the Library users have had to respond to the challenges that we put in their face about noise, inconveniences in terms of reductions of spaces.

Stellar Services

We've tried to maintain a level of service and accessibility to computers and rooms, and the university has enhanced that by providing other rooms as spaces in other places in the immediate vicinity so that students are not inconvenienced. So, in terms of disruption – of course any building project is going to be disruptive, but the complaints we've had from students have been fairly few."

Stephen is also very quick to point out that the Library staff are the biggest reason that the Library is able to continue to provide a great service, even in the midst of this huge (often disruptive) project.

"Ok. So the Library has a history of working with changes to spaces, doesn't matter whether it's the Brunswick campus, Bundoora campus or City campus and so we end up having a high-level team of champions that work towards the end goal, whatever the end goal is. In this case you go through all the process of—specifically with Swanston Library—working out what spaces need to be closed down, what equipment should we keep, what collections need to be moved and how do we go about doing that. That is, what we're currently doing now, preparing for the next stage of NAS. How we operate for a period of time, whether it's six months, three months, until the next stage of NAS is completed and we move into another phase. We end up having a team of people who work together and look at a variety of things, including resources, moves, scheduling, service provision, to come up with the best way to achieve it, and obviously you're doing that in conjunction with DCWC and the NAS Project team, ITS, Property Services and other external people. We have coordination, sponsorship and we have a team of people that are all working towards an end goal."

"The thing is we know why the University has said yes to the project. If a student or potential student was to come to me and say 'What's RMIT doing? What's it going to be like in a year's time?' I'd be able to say: 'Well if you want to come here as opposed to another institution, then come along because you'll have all these benefits of these new facilities that are being offered... not just the Library.'"