

## Australian and New Zealand university libraries respond to the COVID-19 pandemic

**19<sup>th</sup> March 2020** – In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and global health emergency, university libraries in Australia and New Zealand are increasing access to digital resources and services whilst implementing a range of measures in physical spaces to ensure the health and safety of staff, students and the general community.

Chair of the Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL), Ms Jill Benn said, “As universities increase health and safety measures and opt for online delivery, Australian and New Zealand academic libraries are extremely well positioned to provide a range of world-class digital information resources and services to maintain support to students and staff.

*“Libraries across the world have been advocating for fair, affordable and open access for some time, and the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates the need for rapid dissemination of research, as well as open access to scholarly research and authoritative sources. This is vital to support the identification of vaccines and treatments, and to ensure that the public has access to evidence-based and current information.”*

A number of universities have instituted a “pause” in teaching for one week to enable them to adapt campus-based delivery to online modes and libraries are contributing to these preparations and arrangements. University libraries are already offering a range of services in a digital format, including classes and workshops, librarian consultations, and the delivery and sharing of information resources to enable the shift to online learning occurring across the education sector.

Each university library is handling social distancing according to local institutional guidelines and minimising the use of physical spaces on campuses with approaches such as providing hand sanitiser, information posters, sanitising work spaces, reducing seating, reconsidering opening hours, and limiting physical access. Many library staff are now working remotely to support university staff and students thanks to flexible work arrangements provided by their institutions.

CAUL has also taken measures to support members by [cancelling all in-person events and meetings](#) over the coming months, making use of virtual meetings where possible. The CAUL Consortium is working with university libraries globally and recently endorsed the [International Coalition of Library Consortia \(ICOLC\) statement](#) on the effect of COVID-19 on library services and resources.

A number of library vendors and publishers are showing support through unlocking paywalled content and facilitating resource sharing during this time, to better support online learning modes and enable open research. CAUL is actively working with vendors to enhance and increase these measures and is very grateful to those who have already put support mechanisms in place.

**End**

For comment

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## **About CAUL**

The Council of Australian University Librarians ([CAUL](#)) is the peak leadership organisation for university libraries in Australia. CAUL members are the University Librarians or equivalent of the 39 institutions that have representation on [Universities Australia](#) and the 8 members of the [Council of New Zealand University Librarians \(CONZUL\)](#). CAUL makes a significant contribution to higher education strategy, policy and outcomes through a commitment to a shared purpose: To transform how people experience knowledge – how it can be discovered, used and shared.