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The Higher Education Technology Agenda

## A Shared Leadership Approach to Change Management in Systems Project

Approaches to change management usually bring to mind the analogy of herding cats. However, bringing people together as part of a project using a gentler approach of devolved leadership is like moving cows, guiding staff to find their own way along the change path. Encouraging staff to take responsibility, contribute, engage, learn, problem-solve, and share ideas, knowledge and opinions creates a collaborative culture that can deliver projects more effectively.

In 2012 USC Library embarked on a feasibility project as part of an identified systems roadmap to evaluate both traditional library systems and the new library services platforms coming onto the market. The outcome was a strategic decision to move towards library services platforms and keep a watching brief as these developed further over the next 12-18 months. In 2013 a second project in the roadmap focussed our attention on the evaluation and implementation of a library resource discovery layer. The subsequent Stage Three project (library services platform evaluation) is currently underway.

The approach taken for these systems projects has involved a parallel journey in staff development as a critical part of the change management process: building skills, knowledge, understanding, responsibility and engagement. The combination of representatives with different HEW levels and from technical and client-focussed teams on the discovery project drew upon the skillsets and broad experiences of both but also enabled staff to develop a cross-team awareness and understanding of other areas. A key factor in the positive outcome of the discovery layer project was ensuring all staff developed a sound technical understanding of how discovery layers worked, their limitations and strengths.

It is critical for a devolved leadership approach to change management that a culture of trust and mutual respect is established from the start. Upon project initiation the teams developed a set of value statements which were agreed on and provided the level playing field necessary for multi-level cross-team contribution and collaboration. There appears to be a flow-on effect from this culture of trust out to all staff.

The current library services platform project has formalised these approaches to collaboration and change management, following on from the success of the discovery layer implementation.

This paper will discuss and demonstrate this approach to change management and how it has evolved during the systems projects undertaken at USC since 2012.

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