Whitehorse Manningham Libraries, VIC

eSmart Libraries Coordinator: Paul Hatcher

eSmart Working Group
L-R: Annette Watt, Paul Hatcher & Debbie Cin (absent Alex Hallet & Peter Smith)

Where are you at in your eSmart Libraries journey?

Whitehorse Manningham Libraries have just successfully completed the implementing phase and now moving into the sustaining phase. We are looking forward to continuing to maintain and promote eSmart awareness to the community.

What have been the most challenging aspects of your eSmart Libraries journey so far?

The most challenging aspect of the eSmart journey has probably been coordinating the members of the eSmart Working Group from different branch locations and departments to meet for monthly face-to-face meetings.

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We decided to proceed with the scheduled meetings regardless of whether everyone could attend, in order to maintain the momentum of the project.

Distributing the meeting agenda and links to the relevant online resources prior to the meetings, enabled each member of the team the opportunity to provide input, regardless of whether or not they were able to attend.

How does eSmart Libraries fit in with the day-to-day processes already in place at your library?

Our existing policies and user agreements already outlined appropriate conditions of use required when using the computer facilities and our public training sessions included a component of eSmart awareness.

However, eSmart Libraries enabled us to streamline these policies and training guidelines to better reflect the values and principles of eSmart.

What advice did you provide to the community on how to manage cybersafety prior to implementing eSmart?

Prior to eSmart, WML had organised some public internet safety awareness sessions aimed at providing information about the risks specifically facing young people, and offered tools and tips to make their internet experience a safe and positive one.

Cybersafety links were also included on the information pages of the website and online safety information was displayed during cybersafety awareness weeks.

Despite efforts to provide cybersafety advice to the community prior to eSmart, our approach had been fairly ad hoc. Implementing eSmart has enabled us to provide a more consolidated and consistent delivery of eSmart awareness to the community.

Do you feel eSmart will benefit members of the community who do not have access to digital technologies at home?

eSmart Libraries will benefit the community by providing reassurance that their visit to the library will be a safe and positive one. Digital literacy, including the ability to navigate the internet, adjust privacy settings and determine the reliability of online information, has become essential to online learning and enjoyment.

I think the dangers associated with digital technologies have often created barriers for many people wanting to embrace new technology.

The eSmart message presented throughout the libraries via signs, posters, information brochures, user agreements, Cybersafety Help buttons, etc., clearly declares the Libraries' commitment to providing a safe zone in which to explore and embrace technology rather than fear any potentially negative consequences associated with them.

What do you believe are or will be the benefits of implementing eSmart Libraries?

Implementing eSmart Libraries will ensure a more skilled, better informed and empowered workforce; improved organisational procedures and guidelines; and increased opportunities for community connections.

It will also provide comfort and reassurance to the community that in spite of the growing presence of digital technologies, their local library will continue to be a friendly, inclusive and safe haven to explore and enjoy the benefits of existing and emerging technologies.

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