

University's Landmark Library Building Honoured in Auckland Ceremony

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The University of Otago's Information Services Building took top honours last Friday evening at the Property Council of New Zealand Rider Hunt Awards, winning the Excellence award for the Education and Art property sector and the Energy Wise award for excellence in energy efficient building design.

The Information Services Building (ISB) was officially opened last October by the Governor General Dame Sylvia Cartwright. It was entered for the awards by Opus Consultants, the NZ (and Dunedin) based architects who worked in tandem with Los Angeles firm Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer and Associates in the design and construction of the building.

Since its completion, the ISB has featured in national and international architectural magazines, attracting accolades for its user-friendly, innovative design, which melds a range of functions relating to student life.

The awards formally recognise the architectural value of the building, says Director of the ISB, Martin Anderson. "It has already attracted strong local interest with a waiting list of people wanting to tour the building - and has gained attention from other universities. The Council of Australian University Librarians/Council of New Zealand University Librarians joint seminar was held here last September and delegates from throughout Australia and New Zealand have been returning for design ideas for their own library developments."

The move towards a new facility was driven by Vice-Chancellor Dr Graeme Fogelberg, when he first took office in 1994. "It was crucial to upgrade the library and this provided the opportunity to broaden the vision and create something exceptional," he said. "Winning this award has confirmed that the building is indeed a world-class facility worthy of our University."

As a replacement and expansion for the former Central Library, it connects the library to the student union building with an atrium called 'the Link' - designed as a gathering place where students can socialise and study informally.

Mr Anderson says the new venue has made "an enormous difference" to students who can now choose from a range of study environments. The building houses 2,200 study spaces in the Central Library and Link, including private study nooks, group study rooms and relaxed study areas, where students can combine their study with socialising and eating. "The students love it. We are seeing the whole facility used to capacity."

University Librarian, Michael Wooliscroft, who also attended the awards dinner, says the ISB is a "most exciting building which has transformed the Dunedin campus of the University. At any one time two and a half to three thousand people are physically using the building with hundreds networked electronically to resources provided by the Library and Information Technology Services. This 'wow factor' building is the envy of many.

"Universities throughout Australasia and further a field in Egypt and Canada are seeking to emulate its features for their own particular communities and have shown keen interest in the planning process as well as the resulting achievement."

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