

Vic Specials

The official newsletter of ALIA Special Libraries (Vic.), a section of the Australian Library and Information Association

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Such a great year! And so many people to thank

Thank you to everyone who made this year special. Without our advertisers the newsletter would not be published, so thanks go to – well you know them, you read about them in each issue: DA Information Services; One Umbrella, Maxus and Resources Options. And thanks to Swets too, who let us take over their boardroom for a committee meeting every month. (They leave it very tidy for us – so thoughtful.)

A very special thank you to DA Information Services. We just send the newsletter to them and they post copies to all of you. Our mail-

ing list is now around 275 – that's a lot of labels to stick on envelopes, isn't it? Our green newsletter is mainly sent to Melbourne librarians, with others going to country Victoria, interstate – and even a few overseas.

Then we must thank all the libraries, their managers and staff who invited us to visit. They prepared and presented informative, interesting, (fascinating) insights into running and organising their libraries. This is how we hear about the behind-the-scenes secrets of information professionals carrying out their roles as supportive, innovative managers: guiding, teaching, mentoring, supervising, organising, researching ... well you know that librarians use all their skills and more, to support those in whatever organisation they work in. These events were free to ALIA members because the host library also organised the refreshments. We were well fed at all the events because everyone knows that librarians are hungry after a long day hunting – for information, that is.

Thank you to the librarians and associated staff, not to mention the managers who agreed to have a horde of librarians visit their workplace. In 2004 we visited:

- SBS at the new Federation Square and met Cherrill McGee;
- State Library of Victoria where we enjoyed a lunchtime visit to the Express Information Centre and a tour of the La Trobe Reading Room;
- Philanthropy Centre to discover the world of people who think about others, with Louise Arkles;
- Immigration Discovery Centre to meet Helen Sartin, co-ordinator (and that other busy librarian, Sandra Winchester from Museum Victoria who was lurking in the background);
- Swets HQ at Bennetts Lane in the city, to learn of the latest trends in information services; and lastly
- The Athenaeum Library in Collins Street with our friends from ALIA Vic, for our end-of-year celebration. Ian McGregor, the Lending Services Librarian, at Monash University Library organised this. Thank you, Ian.

This year, in November, the Athenaeum library celebrated its 165th birthday. Well done and congratulations to all. Your patron, the goddess Athena is no doubt pleased with your efforts. ■

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Melbourne Athenaeum Incorporated

The Melbourne Athenaeum Incorporated is the oldest public institution in Victoria.

In 1839 the forerunner of the present Melbourne Athenaeum was founded, with Captain Lonsdale as President and Superintendent Charles LaTrobe as Patron. The original title was the "The Melbourne Mechanics' Institute". In 1840 the present site was purchased at a Government land sale and by 1842 a substantial brick building of two storeys was completed. It was predicted in one contemporary newspaper that "when finished it would be the noblest edifice in the province". One of the earliest tenants was the Melbourne City Council who used the hall as its Council Chamber till 1852 when the first Town Hall was built.

By 1852 the large influx of population following the gold rush benefited the Melbourne Mechanics' Institute, with many new arrivals settling in Melbourne and becoming members. A new hall was completed in 1872, and in 1873 the Institution changed its name to the Melbourne Athenaeum. It was decided in 1910 to convert the Upper Hall into

an Art Gallery, and throughout its fifty-year life the gallery displayed paintings by famous Australian artists including Hans Heysen, Arthur Streeton, Tom Roberts and Albert Namatjira.

Moving into modern times, in 1924 the hall was converted to a theatre, which it still is today. The Athenaeum was the first theatre to present talkies in 1929. The centenary of the organisation was celebrated with pride in 1939, a history was published and the opportunity was taken to have the library and reading rooms re-organised. In 1981 the Melbourne Athenaeum building became entry number 501 on the State's Register of Historic Buildings. Nowadays few people realise the contribution the Mechanics' Institutes made to the cultural and social development of Victorian cities. They not only provided libraries, reading rooms and newsrooms but offered halls for lectures and classes.

Today The Melbourne Athenaeum Inc. is run by an elected committee as a not-for-profit organisation, which operates purely for the benefit of library members. The library is equivalent to

a medium-size public library, and purchases between 220-300 new books per month. It specialises in a large range of popular fiction and biographies; approximately 60,000 books and magazines are on its shelves and available to borrowers. Three clerical staff and a part time librarian currently operate the library between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday, Wednesday evenings until 8pm, and on Saturdays from 8.30am till 3pm. A recent survey of members indicated the attractions of the library were the atmosphere and knowledgeable staff, and the range and availability of the types of books they liked to read.

Delina Schembri-Hardy.
President of the Melbourne Athenaeum Inc:

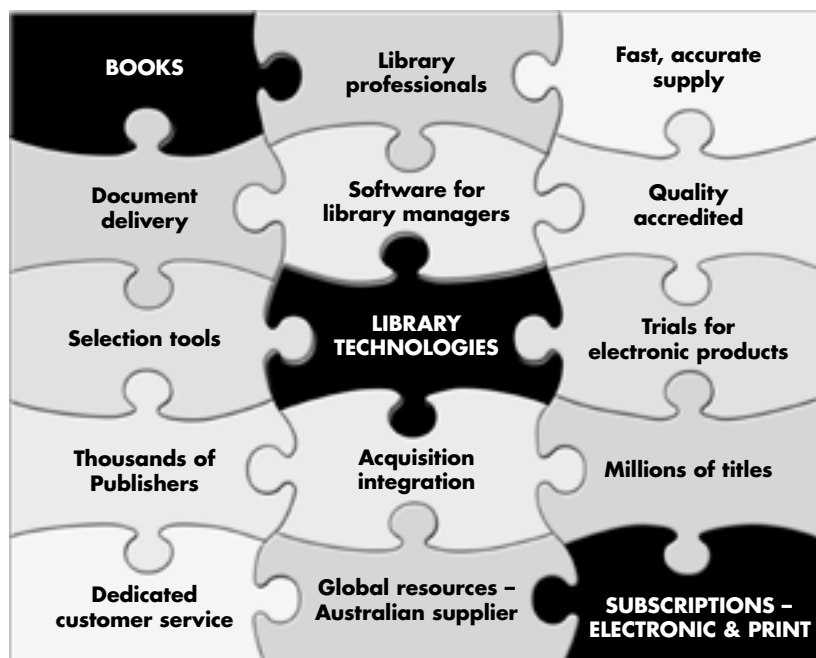
If you would like to join the library, or visit, the address is 188 Collins Street.

For information contact:
Jill Bartholomeusz, Librarian,
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Australia Red Cross National Resource Centre

by Sharon Pimm

Manager, Australian Red Cross Research and Information Service

The Australian Red Cross belongs to the largest humanitarian network in the world. As one of the 181 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies within the International Red Cross Movement, our 27,000 trained volunteers and 988 staff, join with the 97 million volunteers and a global staff of 300,000 people who assist and offer relief to the most vulnerable anywhere in the world during times of conflict and natural disaster. Like our worldwide colleagues we are committed and motivated by the fundamental principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality.

Since its founding in 1914, the Australian Red Cross has continued the work of our predecessors to respond to the needs of Australians in times of war, peace and disaster. Today, this voluntary organisation mobilises a network through a nationwide branch structure, delivering over 60 local community programs and services, addressing immediate and long-term needs.

When staff and volunteers of the National Resource Centre mention that they work for the Australian Red Cross, most people automatically think of the "Blood Bank". This confusion is part of our daily life, due to the fact that the Australian Red Cross Blood Service (ARCBS) does have a higher public profile. Although the ARCBS does belong under the Australian Red Cross Society banner, it is an autonomous and totally separate operating division with its own national research library network.

In the beginning...

The earliest recorded mention of a library service within the Australian Red Cross was during the 1930s. According to our executive papers, during that time there was a photographic library as part of the Publicity Department. On 19 August 1943 our minutes record that the first meeting of the Library Service Committee was held at the National Headquarters and states: "This committee was formed for the purpose of

promoting the acquirement and controlling the distribution of reading matter for the sick and wounded of the Forces."

The committee standardised Australian Red Cross library procedures, as well as establishing "Hospital Visitors" training centres in each state where current library protocols, processes and binding methods were taught. This program was the beginning of the Australian Red Cross Hospital Library Service, a mobile library service which visited the rehabilitation hospitals of our returned servicemen and women during the 1939–1945 conflict. Today in some states a variation of this program still continues, with material being supplied by local community public libraries.

National Resource Centre

According to the Australian Red Cross 1943–44 Annual Report in October of 1943 the Publicity Department was having trouble coping with the vast amount of overseas Red Cross material, as well as the copious amounts of publicity material being generated by our own organisation. This department had already established an informal small technical library, so it was decided that this area would be reorganised and turned into a "National Headquarters" library – so today's National Resource Centre began its existence.

By mid-1944 there were a number of volunteer librarians and committee members working with over 110 volunteers in this library service. Over the years the library department went through a number of changes and staffing levels, ending up in today's National Resource Centre which is run by a single Coordinator, with the help of two (one day a week) volunteers.

Towards the future...

Over the years the needs of the clientele of the National Resource Centre have changed. Today the National Resource Centre not only services all Australian Red Cross staff, volunteers and mem-

bers, but is also one of the very few NGO information services open to the public.

The National Resource Centre has extensive specialised collections in subjects such as International Humanitarian Law in Armed Conflict, International Disaster Preparedness, the History and Development of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and of course, the Australian Red Cross. As one of a very few information services in the International Red Cross Movement, the National Resource Centre collections can boast many volumes that are often the only copies of ICRC publications in Australia. As these now are mostly out of print it makes the National Resource Centre collections unique. Along with these paper collections, the National Resource Centre also boasts the largest collection of International Committee of the Red Cross films within Australasia.

New premises

In the past year, the National Resource Centre was relocated to new premises in North Melbourne. This move enabled the NRC Coordinator to begin to implement her plan to give digital access to all Australian Red Cross members. The need for this access by the remote users both within Australia and the Asia-Pacific region has led the staff and volunteers into a new world of information dissemination. The development of our web pages, and the outsourcing of our journal subscriptions, has provided the NRC with a digital foundation to build on. Obtaining a new library management system has also impacted on the provision of services and the team in the NRC are leading the organisation into the 21st century.

As an international information service, the National Resource Centre plays a vital role within the Red Cross humanitarian network. Through its services, it is helping the most vulnerable, by assisting humanity through knowledge. ■

The Future of Consortia from Caval Collaborative Solutions

Consortia have been a more or less integral part of library organisations for as long as many of us can remember. They are a vital and continuing part of the horizons and working fields of library and information professionals. Consortia are clearly a vital part of our present operating environment. Do we understand why this is the case and what we should be doing about it?

Library consortia have mostly come into existence through two motivations. Firstly, it is the desire of librarians to work together, to work collegially and a drive to share and make information readily accessible. The other motivation is to achieve economies or savings for their organisations. The future of organisational relationships, particularly in the not-for-profit sector, is changing rapidly, making it even more important to understand the very nature of consortia relationships. The existing, favoured work behaviour may

or may not be the appropriate behaviour into the future.

Changes in all working relationships require adaptation in style, re-alignment in structures and often the acquisition of new operating skills. It is readily seen that many of these implications are happening on a daily basis around us. It is also easily observed that the rate of the changes is occurring more swiftly than in the years previous. *The Future of Work* by John Malone draws the conclusion that the nature of organisational relationships is moving into a mode which is characterised by collaborative styles of behaviour. He highlights that these changes are being found necessary because of the demands of complexity and the realisation that not only are not all the answers known at the top of the organisation but that we need to find ways to utilise the knowledge levels of the organisation to overcome the top-down management strategies.

The imperative for librarians in the development of cooperative structures has never been profit. A soon to be published article (*An Exploratory Study of Collaboration in New Zealand Tertiary Libraries* by Colleen Finnerty, AARL, 2005) details many of the studies into cooperative and collaborative activity. Finnerty identifies that of all the joint library activities taking place in New Zealand less than 10% have a written policy and only 22% have a written contract. This degree of informality has all the hallmarks of cooperative activity rather than formal and committed collaborative activities. The respondents (79% of them) to this study felt that they wanted more joint activities. Given the gap between the desire for more of this activity and the lack of real commitment to such activity, it is worth asking whether librarians

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...Yes, there is another option



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The Future of Consortia

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do really know how to move these activities forward. There is a recognition that we like working together, that that there can be benefit but we do not want to cramp our institutional powers and responsibilities with serious and contracted arrangements.

A recent conference, *Future of Consortia*, a conference held by Caval Collaborative Solutions in conjunction with its 25th Anniversary Celebrations, in Melbourne last October, drew the following list of opportunities and challenges for library consortia:

Opportunities for Consortia

- To motivate libraries to remain relevant to patrons and users
- To leverage off vendor experiences
- To influence government and funding bodies
- To purchase well

- To go beyond the sharing of resources and content
- To create commercial ideas and concepts
- To develop the skills of information professionals
- To better understand users' needs and expectations
- To help libraries deliver their primary goal (for their parent organisations)
- To establish "guerrilla" consortia – specific needs in time

Challenges for Consortia

- Sustainability
- Chasing the very big deals
- Fracturing the market with too many consortia
- Duplication of effort and resource utilisation
- Keeping fresh – neither fading nor lurching
- Maintaining flexibility
- Resources required for consortia operation

- Roles and responsibilities of consortia member organisations
- Volunteer nature of participation – sustainable?

Moving into this new world of management and resources sharing arrangements requires different skills and approaches. The strategies adopted by government require a considerable amount of re-thinking and new styles of management. The Caval Collaborative Solution's training program has been designed by librarians for librarians in periods of transition. The new 2005 program will be available shortly, developing from and significantly enhancing the 2004 program. It will strengthen the new skills asked for and required for this future, while maintaining the flavour of the practical hands-on flavour of the program's intention.

To view the training program for 2005, log on to Caval's website: (<http://www.caval.edu.au>) ■

Keep in touch in 2005

In the new year we are organising some interesting library visits for you. The first one is in February when we say hello to Christine Worthington, Promotions & Publications Librarian at the Prahran Mechanics' Institute. The history of libraries is a fascinating subject. This is your chance to learn about the important part this historic library played in the development of libraries in Victoria. Please ensure Mary Ayling has your email address so that you receive the details of the visit. We don't want you to miss out.

Early history of the Prahran Mechanics' Institute

In the 1850s, the Colony of Victoria saw a number of mechanics' institutes founded, based on the model of the mechanics' institutes movement in Britain, for "moral and mental improvement". The institutes received some government support and usually erected buildings which became meeting places for the local community. In Prahran, where a few small townships or hamlets were surrounded by bush and swamps, the Rev. William Moss and some local residents took steps in April 1854, to set up a mechanics' institute. The Committee of Management's first moves were to establish a library, institute a program of lectures and raise money by public subscription

for a building. By 1856, the building in Chapel Street, near the corner of Greville Street, was declared open by the Governor, Sir Henry Barkly.

An invitation to visit this library is extended to ALIA members, particularly special librarians. Come and visit in February 2005. Mary Ayling will email details to you, early in 2005.

Your committee needs you

The Vic Specials Committee, as previously mentioned, meets once per month. Jane Oliver, the Convenor is leaving Melbourne and we will miss her. Secretary Mary Ayling, keeps us in touch with our parent organisation ALIA and spends hours on the minutes, and Jean Truebridge keeps the books – the accounting ones. The newsletter Co-ordinator only works four times a year but takes full credit for all the work the others do – such is the life of a committee member. Wouldn't you like to come and join us? Our meetings last about an hour, and we need more friends to talk to. See page 8 for contact details.

Blood matters

The article on page 2 of this newsletter has an article about the Red Cross and believe it or not, it's a co-incidence that the following information was circu-

lated to health libraries recently.

Tara Bansal announced the launch of an important new book published by The Australian Red Cross Blood Service (ARCBS) called: *Blood matters: A Social history of the Victorian Red Cross Blood Service* by Matthew Klugman, 2004, 236 pgs. Cost \$39.95.

If you are interested contact the librarian who will send you an order form, or if needed, more information about the contents of the book.

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More, more – please

We enjoy visiting libraries and meeting the managers who work as sole librarians or as part of a team. We have been very lucky to have so many friends invite us over for a chat. Can we come to your place? If you would like to host a special event for special librarians contact one of the committee members mentioned on the back page of this newsletter. Librarians are quite well behaved. ■

Interview with Jane Oliver

Jane Oliver, well known librarian and member of the Vic Specials committee is leaving town and moving to Adelaide, early next year. Members of the committee and all your special librarian friends in Melbourne wish you well, Jane. Thank you for all your work with the committee. You are a very special librarian and we will miss you.

Why did you become a librarian?

I liked the idea of being able to organise any type of information so that it could be stored and retrieved. I also enjoy reference work and the hunt for the most relevant citation. It is very satisfying to be able to provide customers with the information they need.

How many years have you been involved with libraries/information work?

I have been involved with libraries full-time from 1973 to 2001 and part-time from 2001 to 2004, a total of 31 years.

Describe your very first job as a librarian

My first job as a librarian, was Assistant Librarian at The Royal Melbourne Hospital in 1973 with librarian Elisabeth Giddy. My main responsibility was the entry and circulation of new journal issues and arranging

journals for binding. I also did some reference work. This was in the days when searches of Index Medicus were carried out by hand and a list of references was typed up on a manual typewriter. This often involved a lot of white-out if the whole page was not to be typed again because of one mistake.

When I left the Royal Melbourne Hospital in 1987, Mary McGill was Chief Librarian.

And where did you work after that?

After the Royal Melbourne Hospital Library I worked at the Gordon Craig Library, Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. The previous librarian there had been Betty McNeice. My duties as Librarian included library management, including preparation of the budget, the more complex reference searches, marketing and cataloguing. I had a library technician as an assistance (Jennifer McGurgan, later Jennifer Jolley) who was responsible for the maintenance of the journal collection and interlibrary loans. Jennifer and I left the College of Surgeons in 2001, due to a restructuring of our positions.

And then what did you do?

My third job from 2002 to 2004 was at Women's Health Victoria with librarian Mary Russell. Women's Health Victoria have a feminist approach to health information for women, which I hadn't come across before. I started off doing voluntary work until paid employment became available. Since 2002, I have had a mixture of paid and voluntary work. The paid work involved covering the circulation/reference desk when Mary was on holidays, responsibility for the current awareness service called *In the Newspapers*, and cataloguing. Voluntary work at Women's Health involved a project to cull old, irrelevant materials in the filing cabinets and updating the library catalogue on computer to reflect the changes in the files.

Is there a pattern here?

You can see that all my jobs have been in special libraries, specifically health libraries. I have been lucky to work in a subject area that really interests me.

What was your most interesting job or project?

It's difficult to say as there were many interesting reference questions over the years. I think the most interesting developments in libraries have been the introduction of computers to search databases and compile library catalogues, then the introduction of the World Wide Web.

I enjoyed my involvement with the Cowlshaw Collection of old books held at the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons.

My work at Women's Health Victoria has involved using DB/Textworks, a very flexible cataloguing and indexing system that I enjoy using.

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Swets ad



Success Strategies for Finding the Best People

With employment rates at a record high, it is becoming increasingly difficult to source top Information Management staff. Research and demographic data indicate that this will continue. Employers need to differentiate themselves and develop appropriate recruitment strategies to source and attract quality applicants.

Re-think your advertising & interviewing techniques. It is best to ...

- Investigate and identify the appropriate media to attract the best people
- Highlight benefits in your advertisements rather than just listing requirements
- Sell the position and your company, don't turn the interview into an interrogation
- Know the market and IM trends across a range of sectors to identify the best skills
- Have recent IM interviewing experience to be able to benchmark roles and salaries
- Use behavioural interviewing and referencing skills to identify best-fit applicants

Don't necessarily wait for someone to resign. Be prepared and ask yourself ...

- Should I request resumes from external sources before a vacancy arises?
- Have I allowed enough lead time to source the best person, not the first person?
- Can I devote enough time to effectively screen, assess and interview applicants?
- Will the process remove valuable time and resources from my core business?
- Would it be more cost effective to outsource the recruitment process?

For a successful sourcing strategy you need to have ...

- Access to the widest talent pool IM professionals throughout Australia
- Relationships with a variety of IM networking groups across a range of industries
- A recognised brand and marketing plan to entice passive job seekers
- A website that regularly attracts quality IM professionals

Your staff are the most important part of your business. Dedicating enough time to develop and manage a successful search strategy is integral in attracting the best people. This will take your already stretched time and resources away from delivering quality information services. If you do decide to engage a recruitment consultant, make sure they get to know your business and are experts in your industry.

Though generalist agencies and preferred suppliers may agree to discounted rates, the up-front cheapest option may not be the most efficient or cost effective. They may have a higher number of positions to fill to cover overheads and expenses, resulting in less time dedicated to each vacancy. To ensure a placement in a tight market, the best candidates may be presented to clients paying full fees rather than those locked in to reduced rates.

Specialist information management recruiters have access to a wide range of applicants through national databases and networks. They have strategic industry marketing plans to attract the best applicants and keep up to date with industry trends. Don't rely on traditional methodology and advertising to attract the best people. Business values may be impacted if vacancies cannot be filled. Successful sourcing requires an innovative, fresh and commercial approach.

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Interview with Jane Oliver

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What related skills have you developed?

I have worked as an assistant editor and developed skills in indexing.

And your future plans?

When I move to Adelaide, I hope to register with the Australian Society of Indexers and obtain work as an indexer.

What advice would you give to practising librarians or newly qualified librarians?

I would advise librarians to keep up their networking and computing skills. It's a good idea to check out the skills that are needed for jobs advertised on the websites of employment agencies. It is also useful to have related skills, such as indexing and editing.

I would advise newly qualified librarians to put their names down with employment agencies and work in a number of jobs to gain experience in a variety of libraries. If paid employment is difficult to

find, doing volunteer work is a way of gaining experience – and you get a reference. It is also useful to have a mentor.

Anything else?

I note that the formats and types of information may have changed over the years, but the same skills are still needed to select, organise and retrieve it. ■

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