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The Australian Library Journal

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The end of the affair...

I was first invited to edit ALJ in 1981: the process of selection was not exhaustive. I got a phone call from the then Executive Director, Gordon Bower, consulted a close colleague, went to the inaugural LAA/NZLIA Conference in Christchurch and when I had recovered [conferences were more convivial in those days] accepted the invitation.

The editor I was replacing, Harrison Bryan, had recently been appointed National Librarian and he quickly realised that he had to drop some of his baggage. So he dropped the Journal and it fell into my lap. Immediately prior to Harri's all too brief tenure – he was a natural for the job, as he was in so many of his professional roles — ALJ had gone through a 'popular' phase and had had a professional journalist as editor.

This was what Harri, who has a gift for the apt phrase, called the 'tabloid era' of the Journal, replete with heaving bosoms and wet T-shirts [it was towards the end of the seventies]. For reasons beyond me, the elders of the Association turned their faces against this innocent manifestation of professional *joi de vivre* and opted for 'scholarliness', thus setting afoot one of the great furbphies in the Journal's history. In my first editorial, as I recall [the copy is no longer by me: I am a poor documenter of my own career] I went to some length to attempt to dispel this illusion, which I think reflected the love affair of one of my predecessors with 'the Chicago School' and its illustrious *Library Quarterly*.

I was not, am not, a scholar, but a mere journeyman, as were the majority of the Journal's readers [not then, subscribers: the Journal was reckoned to be an essential corollary of one's annual membership fees and was 'free'] and I thought, and said then, and have been saying ever since, that whilst ALJ might properly honour scholarship and publish scholarly works, its readership, already limited, would diminish further if it omitted, or worse, rejected, those proud accounts of 'how we do it at my library'. No-one has seen fit to contradict this view.

So, since 1981, with the exception of an interval when I held higher office in the Association and the General Council in its wisdom thought that to have a President who was also the Association's Journal editor would concentrate too much power in one anarchistic pen, opted for the appointment of a scholar-librarian, the historian-extraordinaire Dr Michael Talbot, the Journal has continued to reflect a populist colour and has happily offered hospitality to contributions from across the professional spectrum.

It has even accepted contributions from 'outside the profession', which raised some eyebrows. It has published material from academics in concert with offerings from library technicians – and it's surely time we found a more descriptive title for this active and professionally literate subset of the profession – and I would be hard put to say which group has been more active in the submission of articles for publication. But certainly it was pressure from the educators in their 'publish or be demoted' hothouse which led to the introduction of refereed articles a decade or so ago.

The Journal has trailed its coat on a variety of issues, published an article by a former Prime Minister [which led to one of the two threats of legal action during my term of office – surprisingly few, considering – and that from a former National Librarian] and within the limits of contributions offered – has made a genuine attempt to reflect the profession's interests.

It has done so with an absolutely free hand: except for a few years when I was managing editor, copy has always gone through the National Office for publication, and although it has sometimes carried material critical of the Association and its officers, no-one – and there were plenty of opportunities – ever sought to inhibit, censor or comment on my copy prior to publication. In this, the Association has been absolutely true to its principles.

The Journal has generally attempted to provoke, resuscitate, revive, and sustain debate in the profession with variable success. On one occasion it published the quote from Eric Moon (to the effect that the health of any professional body might be judged by the intensity of debate in the correspondence pages of its journal) as an 8-point footnote on an otherwise blank page headed 'letters to the editor' [which *feu de joie* misfired miserably, as did the insinuation of the famous Anglo-Saxon expletive into an editorial]. I draw no conclusions from either deafening silence.

The Journal has published articles from seasoned veterans in the literature and citation wars together with a great many pieces from apprentices and students, and I would be hard put to say which has given me more pleasure.

Which leads me to the admission that whatever faults and foibles the Journal might be accused of in the 85 or so issues which I have had the honour to preside over, they are mine alone. I have had the benefit of advice and guidance from long-standing colleagues on the Editorial Board: Marianne Broadbent, David Jones, Neil Radford and lately, Peter Clayton – and a succession of Executive Directors: none has argued with my fundamental premise that although advice from any quarter was welcome the Journal *could not be edited by a committee*.

In my first stint, the decade from 1981, the Editorial Board would meet once a quarter in the Association's Sydney offices and review all contributions [more abundant in those days] selecting and rejecting by consensus but often with a degree of frankness which more than once led the editor to observe that a tidy superannuation might be extracted from inducements *not* to publish the opinions of the Editorial Board.

To those individuals, at first merely acquaintances but now highly regarded friends and colleagues, I offer my affectionate thanks for their support, encouragement and fortitude. The late and much-missed Warren Horton acted as an unofficial monitor to ALJ, as he did to so many of the Association's enterprises.

I must also acknowledge the fortitude of the Executive Directors who held office during my watch: Gordon Bower; Sue Phillips; Jenny Adams; the late Susan Acutt; Sue Kosse, Virginia Walsh, Jennefer Nicholson and latterly Sue Hutley. From all of these I had nothing but support and [an occasionally tremulous] encouragement.

Others in the National Office have also been of inestimable comfort and invaluable sources of advice: the formidable Irene Strachan, Bob Missingham; Emma Davis; Ivan Trundle; Karen McVicker, Sharon Cunningham, Marie Murphy and Wei Burns — always tolerant of the faulty calculations in my invoices. Phil Teece, whose views on industrial relations so closely accorded with my own, formed as they were in my pre-librarian days in the Heavy Mill at Lysaght's, was always good for an article or chat on matters industrial and political.

My friend, colleague and bolted-on Roos supporter, Gary Gorman came onto the scene to relieve me of the burden of handling the continuous stream of materials which poured in, clamouring for review. Thanks, Gazza.

To my many contributors who have entrusted me with their precious words: I can never thank you enough. The Journal is its contributors: without whom, nothing. May you grow and prosper, and especial good wishes to those of you whose professional writing first appeared in these pages. And I must not forget the debt to that stalwart band of reviewers whose work graces every issue.

My warmest good wishes to my successor, Ian McCallum, the most dedicated [and optimistic] member of the Association and the profession it has ever been my honour to meet: Ian — may you get as much pleasure as I have from the job.

Thank you all for the privilege, honour and responsibility of editing your Journal over the last quarter century.

The Editor

In this issue Tara Brabazon takes a stick to, among others, the Prime Minister, for engaging in opportunistic and slipshod attacks on educators and the teaching professions, asks for more discussion about the all-important 'why' of teaching and pleads for temporary relief 'from the plague of outcome-based education, generic competencies, mission statements... that floods our mailboxes'. Amen. Victoria Anderson and David Jones make an informed and impassioned argument on behalf of the public library, and about the essential role – a matter of survival – of its lay advocates and champions. Ellen Forsyth opened my eyes, and she may make some of you blink, with her stimulating account of the possibilities for the application of wireless data technology in libraries. In Western Australia, Simon Lewis, Harriet Denz-Penhey and J Campbell Murdoch seize on a federal government initiative and with the aid of a sympathetic faculty and school go the full Monty to reduce disadvantage in the provision of library resources to those medical students who elect – and more power to them – to train for a full year in rural and remote WA: a cheerful story of obstacles overcome. Jane Heazlewood, Bob Pymm and Roy Sanders go in search of their LIM graduates from the class of 2003 – 2004 and come up with some surprising and some dismaying observations, including that of the Australian Labour Force Survey of 2005 which found a median professional age of 47. David Jones, one of the Journal's most devoted contributors, closes the account with 'State Librarians I have known since 1826', a sometimes whimsical review of the characters, idiosyncrasies and occasionally the outright follies of those who have held the office since that date. Book reviews, of course, and not the least valuable of our contributions.

Thinking pop literacies, or why John Howard should read more

Tara Brabazon

The author reviews the relationship between 'literature' and pop culture, arguing that both are part of an intellectual continuum, and that to attempt to extol one and demonise the other is not only based on false and simplistic premises, it is exclusive and destructive. She reminds us that 'All education is based on assumptions about standards and quality. We carry values in our minds that subtly but continually remind us of gradings and shadings of importance and significance.' And that this needs to be acknowledged. Education is not value-neutral, objective or ethically and intellectually pure. She draws attention to 'the dire state of debates about education in Australia', and offers a more positive and proactive agenda is offered for 'putting the pop into the literacy'.

Manuscript received June 2006

This is a refereed article

Postmodern troubles cannot be adequately handled by modern means.
Zygmunt Bauman¹

ALL EDUCATION IS BASED ON ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT STANDARDS AND QUALITY. TOO OFTEN we teachers and librarians do not admit these assumptions to ourselves, let alone to those who are being taught or instructed in the intricacies of the information age. We carry values in our minds that subtly but continually remind us of gradings and shadings of importance and significance. My aim in the next few pages is to ask all of us involved in education – particularly librarians and teachers – to temporarily disconnect from the outcome-based education, generic competencies, mission statements and strategic plans that flood our inboxes with overlarge attachments and ruin our meetings with overblown rhetoric. For a moment, de-centre content management. Let us *not* think about *what* we are teaching,

¹ Z. Bauman, 'Universities: old, new and different', from A. Smith and F. Webster (ed.), *The Postmodern University? Contested visions of higher education in society*, (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1997), p. 24.

but *why* we are teaching. Let us *not* think about computer literacy, but the subtleties of information literacy and the building of knowledge,² wherever we may find it in the digital or analogue world. Such a transitory replacement of 'the what' with 'the why' reveals our assumptions about teaching and learning, reading and writing. For a moment, we will embrace Paul Hager's description of learning 'as a contested and poorly understood concept.'³ Such a definition reminds us why so much money and time has been spent on software and hardware, while librarians, information professionals and teachers have been starved of resources, made redundant or disrespected as minor players in the management of education. My task in this paper is to probe cultural value in the contemporary environment of teaching, learning and librarianship. First, there is attention to the dire state of debates about education in Australia. Second, a more positive and proactive agenda is offered for putting the pop into the literacy. To unravel the scale of this contestation and miscomprehension of teaching, learning and cultural value, we commence at the top.

Rubbish

That old aphorism to the effect that 'a week is a long time in politics' does not state the half of it. Between 20 and 22 April 2006, John Howard triggered the most ruthless attack on education within memory. Then, with the press and public attention safely diverted from the claims of corruption in and of the Australian Wheat Board, the Prime Minister could get on with the business of validating the current war in Iraq by drawing simple historical and nationalist connections with the 'heroic diggers' just in time for ANZAC Day on 25 April. Yet his political 'week' – of three days – will have lasting consequences for those of us who teach for a living, rather than simply talk about it. The Prime Minister moved on to other issues. His attacks on professionalism, intelligence, expertise and the value of scholarship last much longer than the next news cycle.

On Thursday 20 April 2006 John Howard stated on radio that 'I mean we all understand it's necessary to be able to be literate and coherent...and we also understand there's high-quality literature and there's rubbish, and we need a curriculum that encourages an understanding of the high quality literature and not the rubbish.'⁴ Ponder the phrasing: 'I mean we all understand' and – again – 'we also understand'. There is no evidence presented or experts consulted. Merely repeating words like 'we understand' and 'rubbish' does not make the statements true.

Once the Prime Minister of a country starts using words like 'gobbledygook' and 'rubbish' to describe an English curriculum, all the crazy cold warriors defrost themselves to find reds, not only under the bed, but also in our classrooms and universities. The word 'Marxist' was used more often in mainstream press during two days in April than in a whole year on Trotskyite blog spots. Suddenly I realised to whom

2 I acknowledge John Bagnole and John Miller for their innovative discussion of information literacy, digital information literacy, information competence, information technology and information gathering. Please refer to 'An interactive information literacy course for international students: a practical blueprint for ESL learners', *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*, Vol. 6, No. 4, March 2003, <http://www-writing.berkeley.edu/tesl-ej/ej24/al.html>, accessed on May 27, 2006.

3 P. Hager, 'Changing pedagogy: productive learning', *Oval Research Working Paper*, No. 16, 2003, p. 1.

4 J. Howard, in R. King, 'Howard blasts OBE as rubbish', *The West Australian*, 21 April 2006, p. 1. The conservative nature of *The West Australian* is confirmed when recognizing that on the same page that this news item was reported, the bold heading read, 'Happy 80th birthday, Ma'am' alongside a picture of Queen Elizabeth II.

these commentators were referring. Anyone who works in a school or university, and reads widely, is dangerous. *They must be Marxists*. The editorial from *The Australian* on 22 April 2006 reads as follows:

One of the more bizarre aspects of the controversy is the postmodern fixation on Karl Marx as an appropriate filter through which to examine literature. For one thing, he was an economist, not a literary critic. For another, his writings inspired the deaths of perhaps 100 million people around the world, and this tragedy is better learned about in history classrooms. And teaching high school students to interpret literature through ephemeral 'isms' is, by definition, a way to produce students with dated knowledge.⁵

It is important for those of us who do read, rather than those who are merely critical about other people's reading, to rebut this nonsense with clarity, boldness and frequency. This opinion – in a national newspaper – was wrong factually and in interpretation. Post-modernism and Marxism are divergent theoretical and political formations. If Marx is blamed for Stalinist purges, then Charles Darwin is responsible for Nazism and Jesus of Nazareth caused the Crusades. Social scientific causality ('A' creates 'B') requires more proof than the woolly thinking of a newspaper editor without epistemological awareness or historical reasoning. Even more disturbingly, this editorial was cut and pasted into diverse websites and blogs to increase its circulation and 'truth effect', not 'truth'.⁶

The tragedy of this 'debate' is that serious points of discussion about teaching and librarianship have been smeared with the tar of obfuscation. In these two days in April, four separate discussions, about literacy, the English Literature curriculum, popular culture and post-modernism, were merged and blurred. All four topics would have some value in being raised for public debate, but assuming a convergence was a mistake. Literacy has been much more than the encoding and decoding of print since Richard Hoggart published *The Uses of Literacy* in 1957. The Prime Minister is fifty years out of date in this debate. The discussions about the English Literature curriculum have their origins in claims made by Colin McCabe in 1981 that Derrida – an evil Frenchman – was destroying the pleasure and purity of great English books through his 'foreign' ideas. So the Prime Minister is twenty-five years out of date on this issue. To abuse popular culture as 'rubbish' is to repeat Matthew Arnold's argument – made in 1869 – in *Culture and Anarchy*. In this context, Arnold was 'protecting' the middle class from a revolutionary working class, using claims for the greatness of 'literature' to block disempowered, barely literate citizens from thinking about the conditions of their own lives. Literature was a replacement for political consciousness, a salve for socialist thought. Further, the 'great writers' that the Prime Minister is protecting, such as William Shakespeare, were profoundly popular playwrights in their own time, commenting – often with humour – about the pompous, prideful men who hold power. The issue is not the division between high culture and popular culture. To put it another way, the problem is not in 'the pop'. The goal for effective teaching and information management is to facilitate a dynamic, energetic and relevant culture that encourages thought, debate and a dialogue with the time from which it emerges.

5 'Editorial: Giving out bad Marx,' *The Australian*, 22 April 2006, <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/printpage/0,5942,18884921,00.html>, accessed on 25 April 2006.

6 For example, please refer to 'Education Watch – Mirror Site,' 25 April 2006 <http://users.bigpond.net.au/jonjayray/educ.html>, accessed on 25 April 2006 and 'PM canes 'rubbish' postmodern teaching,' Australian Christian Lobby Website, 21 April 2006, http://www.acl.org.au/national/browse.stw?article_id=9081&print_r=1&from=printer, accessed on 25 April 2006.

While the comments on literature, popular culture and literacy were dated, the attack on 'post-modernism' was the strangest in this carnival of ignorance. I have not mentioned the word post-modernism in a classroom since 1993. This is a controversy without a cause. Theories of *Liquid Modernity*⁷ from Zygmunt Bauman and John Urry's research into mobilities⁸ are intricate, well-cited and – indeed – famous investigations of the social, cultural and political environment of our time. These recent and important works and words are unmentioned by any of these self-appointed commentators on knowledge.

I hold Australian journalists responsible for reporting this verbiage as fact. Their lack of the most basic research in ideas that are often fifty years old is stunning. Not surprisingly, that bastion of tabloidization, *A Current Affair*, continued this beat up – sorry – 'debate' – on its program of Friday April 21. To discuss this issue, two 'experts' were approached. One voice against the Prime Minister was the head of a parent and teacher association. The other view was provided by a journalist from a Sydney tabloid. So a mother of school children and a(nother) journalist were seen to offer more relevant views than the thousands of hard working librarians and primary and high school teachers in this country, or the hundreds of well qualified and internationally credentialed academics who could offer commentary about curricula change and histories of cultural value or critical theory.

The Prime Minister has stage-managed this attack on education without mobilising expertise. His lack of research or evidence was unmentioned and un-assessed by all but a minority of journalists. Earlier in the year, the courageous Maxine McKew on the ABC's *7:30 Report* was able – in three short questions – to demonstrate the complete lack of substantiation or verification of his claims.

McKew: Where do you think we've gone off the rails? You seemed to blame post-modernism today. Too many assignments on 'isms' – feminism, environmentalism – too much of that?

Howard: *We've too much of a stew and a concoction of issues and causes. Now they're part of it, but you've also got to teach the sequence. You've got to say something about the order in which things appeared. You get to understand why was it fully that European settlement occurred in Australia, rather than teach too much about whether it should have occurred. I mean, it did occur and rather than waste our energy in the pejorative about the character of it, we ought to, first of all, understand some of the causes of it and some of the background of it.*

McKew: Why do you see a deficit on this? Are you getting complaints from parents or have you talked to, say, history teachers?

Howard: *It is self-apparent. It is obvious to me that there's –*

McKew: Why so?

Howard: *From talking to people. The increasing number of people I talk to, younger people, who don't have a full understanding of some of these things.⁹*

7 Z. Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2000).

8 J. Urry, 'The complexities of the global,' published by the Department of Sociology, Lancaster University, <http://www.comp.lancs.ac.uk/sociology/papers/urry-complexities-global.pdf>, 2 May 2004.

9 M. McKew and J. Howard, 'Coalition 'rock-solid,' says Howard,' *7:30 Report*, <http://www.abc.net.au/7:30/content/2006/s1555373.htm>, accessed on 6 June 2006.

Two words drill holes through the Swiss cheese that is Mr Howard's argument: his use of 'people' and 'things.' When used, these terms infer generalised thinking, a lack of analytical precision and a deficit in research. The damage caused when a nation's leader probes the hornet's nest of education on the basis of 'people' and 'things' needs to be noted and remembered.

The Australian newspaper continued this blind disregard of fact and history, while using 'post-modernism' to batter and abuse those who teach. They even printed the words of Giles Auty, an old Thatcherite ideologue, who gained some influence – although not much – as a member of the Art Working Group for the National Curriculum for English and Welsh schools in the early 1990s. He was also a writer for *The Spectator* in the United Kingdom between 1984 and 1995. We learn much of the political tenor of the national newspaper from the fact that Auty's CV was convincing enough that he was appointed a national art correspondent for *The Australian*. In moving from art to education, Auty continued his confident Renaissance Man aura, thanking the Prime Minister for raising this literacy issue, but offering an extension of his views: 'does he – or most parents – appreciate fully the extent to which Marxist ideology hides behind the mask of post-modernism?'¹⁰ Auty does not stop this factual error from bleeding into his next mistake. He conflates Marxism with Communism, and then Marxism with critical literacy. Then in the blistering denouement of disasters, Auty blames post-modernism, Marxism, Communism and critical literacy on 'the man in question,' Michel Foucault. Eh? There is something piquant and funny about placing labels on a man who denied and displaced them all his life.

Michel Foucault was not a post-modernist. By some interpretations, he could be claimed as a post-structuralist, but even that label does not sit well. Foucault described his work as part of modernity, disconnecting from the 'posts' that floated around his name. Whatever critiques or criticisms we may have of Foucault, and there are library shelves full of these detailed interrogations, there must be an acknowledgment that this man changed our thinking about history, power and knowledge. Few have any influence in their entire lives on the world of ideas. Foucault is one of those transformative writers. The notion that an intellectual irrelevance like Auty would dare critique a man of this intelligence is bad enough. That *The Australian* newspaper would publish this white noise is worse.

Perhaps the greatest sadness from this whole ignorant interlude in the history of Australian education are the grounds on which Auty critiqued Foucault. This narrow man described Foucault as 'a promiscuous masochist whose areas of interest were in torture, drug-use and totally anonymous sex.'¹¹ Similar descriptions could more accurately be deployed to certain skinny celebrities and well-paid professional footballers. The point is that this critique would not be deployed on these young women and men with a liking for bulimia and gang bangs, cocaine and multiple partners, because they are heterosexual. To abuse a scholar's ideas because he is gay is homophobia at its most grotesque. A liking for leather and bondage is not the basis of a scholarly critique, or even a journalistic one. We use another word for this type of approach. It is called discrimination.

¹⁰ G. Auty, 'Top Marx for our educators,' *The Australian*, 21 April 2006, p. 14.

¹¹ *ibid.*

If Auty was actually being courageous, it would have been more effective to abuse a theorist actually associated with post-modernism, Jean Baudrillard. But he would not suit Auty's politics. Baudrillard is heterosexual. In fact, he is so heterosexual that he is on to his fourth wife. He is also alive, so any lies, misrepresentations or inaccuracies about his life and ideas could result in legal action. Also, Baudrillard rarely uses the term 'post-modern'. When he does, it is a term of abuse that describes the sentimentality of Western culture, so celebrated and performed by writers like Auty. Baudrillard probes war, capitalism, America and the media. He is as dangerous as a virus in an airport. It is much safer to attack the dead leather queen.

Besides having written for *The Spectator* at the height of Thatcherism, Auty also contributes in Australia to *Quadrant*, the magazine read by conservative old men when their exclusive golf courses are closed. In a June 2000 article, he showed a deep and pathologised hatred for the left, with an additional twist that was absent from his ideological excursions in *The Australia*. Auty is a Christian. Such a determination of faith is not a problem in and of itself. However while blaming Marx for all the darkness in the world, Christianity becomes the basis of all hope. He states:

Christian fortitude was a major factor in helping Western families survive both the Second World War and the process of rebuilding during the 1950s... However, the 1960s saw a marked dilution of such sterling virtues, as improving prosperity led not to gratitude but to increasingly mindless hedonism. Until the 1960s, drugs were used by only a minute minority in Britain. Today in most Western countries three quarters of all urban crime is connected to drugs. Next time your car or house is ransacked or you are held up at knife point, do please offer a hymn of thanks to the sixties.¹²

The oddity of the Auty's discourse is that he attacks 'progressives' and 'Marxists' for their 'intellectual dishonesty.' Yet this man continues to be published despite his scapegoating, irrationality and fear-mongering. What is required is a cool, balanced and factual analysis of history, literacy debates and educational scholarship.

Let's be clear here. These commentators that align 'post-modernism' and 'Marxism' are wrong. While post-modernity signifies many meanings, theories and approaches, an overarching principle of the paradigm was that it critiqued grand narratives, like Marxism, feminism and post-colonialism – basically all the groups and theories most despised by the neo-conservatives. Such a premise – obviously – was the pathogen in the post-modern paradigm. Post-modernism became one of the grand narratives that it critiqued. But to suggest that 'post-modernists' and 'Marxists' are synonyms, is about as accurate as blaming Saddam Hussein for 11 September. The Prime Minister chose a specific moment to raise this issue. He could have summoned these concerns at any time. Remember, he merely repeated the questioning of English Literature enacted by Colin McCabe 25 years ago, and repeated the views from Auty's *Quadrant* article of six years ago. But Mr. Howard required a circuit breaker, to disconnect the fusing of his government with scandals from the Australian Wheat Board. Once the literacy / popular culture / post-modernism / literature bucket was thrown over the press, the corruption scandal was washed away.

12 G. Auty, 'Post-modernism's assault on Western culture,' *Quadrant*, June 2000, <http://members.optushome.com.au/jimball/Post-modernism.html>, accessed on 25 April 2006.

The goal for politicians and journalists in Howard's Australia is to stop citizens looking in the mirror, to stop us from seeing how we are all implicated in questions of literacy standards, reading level and rate, and the flattening of debate and dissent. The goal for librarians and teachers in Howard's Australia is to use logic, reason and research to demand not only more from our students, but from our leaders. How often have we seen John Howard reading a book? What about his Cabinet? What about the backbenchers? What about the Opposition? I have certainly seen the Prime Minister at the cricket, rugby and Commonwealth Games. If he exchanged one of those sporting photo opportunities to show him reading a novel or a recent non-fiction release, then he could make more legitimate comments about literacy, reading and scholarship. The aim of the second half of my article is to take up one issue in the Prime Minister's discussion of 'gobbledygook' and 'rubbish' to show that the problem is not in popular culture. The problem is in a devaluing of education. The solution is a reconstitution of schools, universities and libraries through literacy.

Popping the sandstone

Throughout the history of schools, universities and formal education, popular culture has been intentionally and actively excluded. The separation of pop from art, without overtly addressing embedded class-based notions of cultural value, served to disenfranchise generations of students from their own social frameworks and literacies. The strength of teaching the popular, to summon Stanley Aronowitz's and Henry Giroux's phrase, is that it creates 'a language of possibility'.¹³ Following their challenge, my goal is to transform literacy into, not a static object to measure in terms of learning outcomes and examinations, but the matrix of educational dialogue about the pathways from information to knowledge. When literacy is defined in this way, it moves freely through historical definitions of cultural value. This is the mode of project outlined by Shapiro and Hughes:

Clearly, defining information literacy broadly, so as to constitute both a liberal as well as a technical art, and turning that definition into a curriculum are major challenges both intellectually and practically, and deserve extended discussion and collaboration among educators and information-systems professionals, humanists, and computer and information scientists.¹⁴

Within their vision, there is no separation of 'old' and 'new' media, and an intricate collaboration between form and content, media and message. For some theorists this information literacy conflates with the phrase 'blended learning'.¹⁵ The result is an active determination from librarians, teachers and students of appropriate media for the correct context. Understanding a software package or being able to re-tell a novel's plot is not enough. Understanding how the selection of software, hardware, media and language frame and filter ideas for specific audiences and contexts remains the goal, and one that is increasingly important.¹⁶

13 S. Aronowitz and H. Giroux, *Postmodern Education*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 181.

14 J. Shapiro and S. Hughes, 'Information technology as a liberal art: Enlightenment proposals for a new curriculum,' *Educom Review*, Vol. 31, 1996, p. 2.

15 J. Eklund, *Driving the Future of e-learning*, (Sydney: Access Testing Centre, 2003).

16 Frode Hegland is currently working on the Liquid Information project. His goal is to make all documents editable, and every word encasing a potential hyperlink. Once more, the focus is on increasingly the 'access' to information, not attention to the literacies required to manage it. Please refer to Jason Walsh, 'Information wants to be liquid,' *Wired News*, 25 January 2005, <http://www.wired.com/news/culture/1,66382-0.html>, accessed on 27 May 2005. To view the Liquid Information, project, please refer to <http://www.liquidinformation.org/history.html>, accessed on 27 May 2006.

If we grant culture a history and politics, rather than an intrinsic value and stability by using words like 'rubbish' and 'gobbledygook', then greater attention is placed on the function and circulation of representations. In pondering the stratification of cultural systems, literacy has a purpose, impetus and agenda. Such a goal was witnessed most poignantly in Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy*.¹⁷ Born into a working-class family in Leeds and educated at his home university, he went on to be an adult education tutor at the University of Hull. He taught literature to people who had been blocked from access to higher education. From such a context, *The Uses of Literacy* weaves Hoggart's personal experience into the text. Fascinatingly, and appropriately for his student cohort at the time, he deployed the tools used to study literature to a much wider range of cultural productions such as music, magazines and newspapers. There was an attention to sport, pubs and working men's clubs. Discussion of language was punctuated with talk about family structures and gender roles. For Hoggart, culture became the method to link literary analysis and social inquiry, text and context, university and social justice.

Hoggart's example is important. Popular culture circulates ideas to a wide audience. While high cultural practices are associated with excellence, these standards are established and circulated through precise historical periods. Teachers and librarians often work with high culture rather than popular culture. But the aim of good teaching and effective librarianship is to deny and decentre the easy and assumed division of art and pop. The trap of these categories is that teachers, writers and researchers spend too much time legitimising the choice of topic against the faceless forces of the elite, rather than exploring the political impact of these representational formations. If a discussion about the role and purpose of popular culture in education is not made, then our classrooms become museums. Teachers become guides through the dusty relics of books and ideas. Education becomes trapped in an infrequently visited library stack. The conservative cry to go 'back to basics' is often code for returning to safe, seamless cultural formations that offer no challenge or argument against the current political order.¹⁸ Conversely, popular culture is formed through the gritty transformations of society through industrialisation. It is a site of commerce and commercialisation, but also play and transformation.

Such judgments and movements of value have profound consequences for the determination of legitimate knowledge. *Te Ara*, the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, while not mobilising user-driven content like Wikipedia, maintains rigid notions of cultural quality. As Russell Brown revealed

If there is one part of the site that grieves me, it is the section on New Zealand music. The last 15 years have seen an emergence of national identity in our popular music that is as significant as the arrival of a characteristically New Zealand literature in the 1930s.¹⁹

17 R. Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, (London: Transaction, 1998).

18 For example, the former Australian education minister, Dr Brendan Nelson stated that 'I think too much of the curriculum is dominated by contemporary television and media... So you've got the kids studying Big Brother and Buffy the Vampire Slayer instead of T S Eliot and Thomas Hardy. Now I'm not suggesting they shouldn't study contemporary fads and the impact they have on our evolving society and cultural values. But I think we diminish and impoverish ourselves if we educate a generation of young Australians that are unfamiliar with Patrick White and Jane Austen and the great authors of the past 200 to 300 years', from C. Johnson, 'Bring back the three Rs: Nelson,' *The West Australian*, 12 August 2005, p. 1.

19 R. Brown, 'Information Entrepreneurs,' 2 September 2005, Public Address.net, <http://publicaddress.net/print,2494.sm>, accessed on 9 September 2005.

Libraries, knowledge, education is embedded in the judgments and values of popular culture. Yet recent popular music – some of which is incredibly innovative and pivotal to the re-makings of identity – suffers from the qualitative determinations of the powerful. Literature is framed as important to nation building. Music is youthful trash. Actually, New Zealand popular culture, through Flying Nun Records, Auckland Pacifica electronica and the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, has transformed Aotearoa/New Zealand far more than literature or cultural criticism. John Docker cut to the political chase when he realised that

Radical intellectuals who despise popular culture suffered from the pride of intellect: they believe in their bones that because working-class people are not formally educated then they lack consciousness, lack the ability to be critical, to make choices, to say no... Only the educated – which means only those of the middle and upper classes who have been university-trained – have the ability and the right to be rational conscious beings who can combine pleasure with discrimination.²⁰

The neo-liberal emphasis, tethering education and employment, means that it is effortless to attack schools and universities for their declining standards, mediocrity and responsibility for the economic downturn. It is also extremely easy to discredit music, film, television and the World Wide Web – or the media generally – for causing the demise of civilisation. Actually new modes of living, thinking and writing are created on dance floors, in darkened cinemas and through hypertext. Intellectual standards in research, writing and scholarship must not be confused with reactionary determinations of cultural ‘quality’ and ‘value.’

A sad, but evocative example of how the teaching of popular music can change lives popped into my inbox in 2005. It reads

From:

Sent: Thursday, 19 May 2005 12:30 PM

To: Tara Brabazon

Subject: A ‘New Order’ in my life

Dear Tara,

Well, it sure has been awhile! I have been wanting to write to you for awhile, but i have so much to tell you that i didn't know where to start!

What made me get off my arse and finally write to you was something that happened last night... but i will start at the beginning. Over the past couple of months i feel like i have had a huge awakening, or an epiphany or something. it sounds so cliched but it is seriously like i have been born again! As you know, i have had a few issues over the past couple of years, and these all came to a head 2 months ago, when i attempted suicide. A couple of weeks after that i went to Melbourne to stay with my step brother for a couple of weeks, and it was there that my whole outlook on life changed. i had many conversations with my bro and his housemate, and through these i came to finally accept myself as a person and the world as imperfect but full of amazing experiences. i have spent too long fighting life – complaining about things,

20 J. Docker, ‘In defense of popular culture’, *Arena*, No. 60, p. 86.

being depressed about things and basically not taking responsibility for my own happiness. To put it simply, i guess i have am growing up. i now see things so differently, i love and accept myself and everyone else as part of the universe – not just the physical universe but the spiritual cycle of life as well. I am no longer self destructive – i eat healthily and exercise regularly, and i have stopped cutting myself for MYSELF, not for anyone else, because i finally see that more than anything i was hurting myself (and certainly not just physically).

So anyway, back to why i finally wrote to you... last night i was at my brother's house (who i couldn't be closer to) and we were listening to music, as we do. i have to admit, i used to be a bit of a music snob – i had my (narrow) likes and wouldn't really step outside the square. But, with the help of my brother, my new attitude and a few herbs, i am appreciating so much more music now. so last night, we were listening to New Order, which i have never liked until last night. i loved what i heard, but knew nothing about them, and when my brother educated me on ian curtis's suicide i finally realised the significance and the powerfulness of the music. it made me think of cultural studies and what you taught us about pop culture and i feel like i understand so much better now. i wanted to tell you all of this, as it feels as though the things you said to me back in first year, and the things we talked about both in class and out of class mean so much more to me now.

i always wanted someone to 'fix' me, to give me the answer, i didn't think i had the strength to do it myself, but here i am! This is all my own doing... the psych didn't do it for me – you were right- it was something i had to do when i was ready, and i did it.

To think that i could have willingly cut my life so short scares the hell out of me now, but i guess sometimes you have to hit rock bottom before you can start climbing back up.

Peace and love...

It is often a cliché that a song saved our lives. In the case of this young woman, the cliché has a core of truth. Even more significantly, it is education that provided an alternative path, a different way of thinking. Popular culture was the language of translation. Such an e-mail serves as a reminder of the powerful and life affirming capacity of popular culture. The difficulty in presenting the optimistic potential and role of popular cultural forms is that since Richard Hoggart wrote *The Uses of Literacy* in 1957, and since the birth and development of cultural studies through the 1960s and 1970s, the political environment has changed. John Hartley captured the liberating context that framed the paradigm during this earlier progressive time

Cultural studies is politically a child of the 1960s, when political radicalism was not only liberating but hip ... when the boundaries between politics, music, sex and drugs became blurred, and when alternative, counter and sub cultures sprang up to claim attention like so many doggies in the window.²¹

Now that the long 1960s is over, pedagogical terrorism is patrolling the limits of acceptable teaching, learning and curriculum. There is a re-establishment of 'basics' and 'fundamental principles.' The playful and excessive tackiness of popular culture has difficulty surviving in classrooms punctuated by such ideologies and narratives.

Affirming an 'agreed' collection of literary texts is part of an ideology of tradition, religion, family and nationalism. Strange ideas, pictures, rhythms and sounds provoke a citizen to think outside of these structures and values. Popular culture is pivotal to the shaping of our identity, of building an image of ourselves, and the alliances that facilitate the creation of community. It is also sensual culture, effecting the body through the propulsion of laughter, the springing of tears or the energy of dancing. In offering narratives of emotion, transposing literacy beyond lettered

21 J. Hartley, *The Politics of Pictures*, (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 16.

representation, popular culture teaches and values different skills, senses and sensations. James Schwoch, Mimi White and Susan Reilly referred to this process as critical citizenship:

We invoke a different way of reading media culture as a part of an alternative theory that opposes current trends in American education, trends that exclusively emphasize excellence, discipline, achievement, and quantitatively verifiable production.²²

The goal of such a process is to create an environment of inquiry, questioning and critical thinking, rather than acceptance, denial or compliance. In recognizing that immersion in popular culture offers a framework of learning, change and thought, the purpose of schools and universities also changes in response to this confirmation.²³ The constitution of media knowledge, based on movements of the body or movements through mouse clicks in the World Wide Web, is not bowing to a culture of equivalence or denying cultural value. Instead, new criteria are created to understand the changes to politics and how we commit to information. We must not deny pop, but create thinking pop, a more expressive and interpretative matrix of ideas.

A key strategy in our schools and universities is not only 'managing,' but enjoying and caring for, students with learning difficulties. A strategy to assist those who may come from a range of cultural and linguistic communities is to mobilise popular culture with theoretical and pedagogical rigour. We all have learning difficulties, strengths and weaknesses. But those who can interpret and write a form of prose valued in formal examination methods are celebrated and validated through education and life. Those who can copy and develop dance steps or hold an expansive knowledge of popular music are rarely celebrated for these skills. Learning difficulties are always diverse in origin, cause and orientation. Behavioural difficulties become overlaid with linguistic, cultural or familial dissonances.²⁴ When students are showing difficulties with more conservative or traditional literacies, and losing confidence through constant testing that reinforces their sense of inadequacy and failure, popular culture is incredibly important for its translation role. Margaret Finders has recognised the relevance of this remedial role, confirming the function of popular culture in 'identity maintenance.' Further, she transforms her theory of critical literacy to incorporate 'both how to use and how one is used by popular culture.'²⁵ Perhaps there is no better statement of the profound, deep and ambivalent role of pop in the contemporary classroom and library. There is no point in celebrating student's popular culture without question or critique. There is a need to acknowledge, understand and contextualise these texts. Lisa Patel Stevens recognised the importance of this pop cult pedagogy:

22 J. Schwoch, M. White and S. Reilly, *Media Knowledge: Readings in popular culture, pedagogy, and critical citizenship*, (New York: State University Press, 1992).

23 Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren confirmed in 'Media hegemony: towards a critical pedagogy of representation,' that 'pedagogy occurs wherever knowledge is produced, wherever culture is given the possibility of translating experience and constructing truths, even if such truths appear unrelentingly redundant, superficial, and commonsensical.' This argument builds into a strong presentation of a critical pedagogy with strong attention to visions of and for the future. This chapter is included in Schwoch, White and Reilly (eds), *Media Knowledge*, p. xxiii.

24 Mary Rohl and Judith Rivalland monitored the complicated determination of these learning difficulties in 'Literacy learning difficulties in Australian primary schools,' *The Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, Vol. 25, No. 3, 2002, pp. 19-40.

25 M. Finders, "'Gotta be worse": negotiating the pleasurable and the popular,' *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, Vol. 44, No. 2, October 2000, p. 146.

I was 11 years old when MTV (Music Television) burst onto the burgeoning scene of cable television in 1981. You would have been hard-pressed to find an adolescent more enraptured by the big hair, dreamlike plot sequences, and over-the-top fashions of music video than I was. However, this was a world that was distinctly separate and removed from the dialogues and actions found within my junior high school classrooms. This dichotomous relationship between school and popular culture permeated my development and practices as a literacy educator.²⁶

Throughout her career, Stevens worked between this disjuncture of education and popular culture. In a desire to converge these spheres, she assembled a checklist of questions for her students, to create thinking pop.

For each portion of popular culture that we shared, we also modeled the inquiry process for students by answering six questions (a) What is the piece of popular culture? (b) Who is the intended audience? (c) Who is not the intended audience? (d) Who stands to benefit from it? (e) Who stands either not to advance in society or even to be hurt by it? and (f) What does this popular culture and its positioning say about U.S. society at large?²⁷

I have taught popular culture at university for thirteen years and Stevens has provided the most succinct model for revealing the political complexity of these texts. When I have used these questions – in fact her whole article – my students have responded with great enthusiasm, debate and discussion.²⁸ They learn critical literacy, and apply these difficult ideas and terms with greater ease because they are using and translating them in their own context. Those teaching students must begin with a respect of their language, experiences and difficulties.

In such a time of flux, popular cultural representations of the web shadow this new history. How wired and unwired citizens think about the internet and web is framed and shaped by already existing popular culture. No longer trapped within the utopian and dystopian binary, the internet and web has become a thinking space for popular culture, allowing citizens to explore the movements in meaning between 'old' and 'new' media. By placing Google, the Web and the Internet in popular culture, rather than isolating 'technology' from 'culture,' or even worse – assembling a barricade between old and new media – a more intricate, complex and accurate history of communication can emerge. Older media always provide information about the cultural formations that transcend it. Emails have 'CCs' – Carbon Copies. Web sites have home 'pages'. Older ways of thinking about space and identity move from print to text and analogue to digital. Greater focus is required on how different modes and media of information encourage or discredit particular social values and groups. For example, young people fetishise mobile phone ring tones. Older men are the booming audience of the i-Pod. Wired senior citizens use email more than any other social group. More attention is required, not to the application itself, but the sociology and context of the user. The moment of a Fordist – one size fits all – internet is at an end. That is why attention to educational policy funding levels and

26 L. Stevens, 'South Park and society: instructional and curricular implications of popular culture in the classroom,' *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, Vol. 44, No. 6, March 2001, p. 548.

27 *ibid.*, p. 552–3.

28 Stevens' reflexive deployment of these critical questions has much to do not only with her emergence in MTV, but the tight relationship between Generation X and popular culture. For my broader discussion of the sociological and political connection between Gen X and popular culture, please refer to Tara Brabazon, *From Revolution to Revelation: Generation X, cultural studies, popular memory*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

the development of media literacy skills is required. There has never been a greater need for more specialised and subtle pedagogies.

Each media extends the senses. Books and cameras extended the potential of the eye. Radio and listening devices such as mobile phone ring tones and the i-Pod extend the capacities of the ear. Television increases the convergent literacies of eye and ear. Gaming and computer applications more generally forge links between the eye, ear and hand, while also changing how we commit to and understand information. As convergence increases, older technologies and literacies are not lost, but feed their values into the mixing desk of 'the next big thing.' Just as disco survives in house music, just as jungle lives in 'drum 'n bass', so is the capacity to read print perpetuated in the i-Pod, enabling the negotiation of a menu on the illuminated screen. Aural literacies, from radio, mobile phone ring tones and other leisure technologies, allow the listener to rapidly recognise the song emerging through the headphones. Reading print is not lost as a skill, but is layered and enmeshed with other literacies and competencies, such as scrolling through text on a screen.

Popular culture emerges from these contradictions and confluences in media and social life, reflecting how older social structures survive, are fragmented or changed. Literacies are formed and ranked when communities claim interpretations of symbolic forms. Some literacies are more important than others. As seen through John Howard's 'intervention' in April 2006, those in power claim their books, media and language as quality and part of educational curricula, while discrediting the rest. Those operating outside of these values may resist, or their literacies and texts may be lost or buried by the dominant group. Yet struggle does not always result in resistance. Audiences, consumers and citizens seek out environments in which they are comfortable and understand the signs and codes. Rarely do we gravitate to those images and ideas that make us uncomfortable or that we do not understand. The electronic revolution that Google has continued has made possible the reproduction and dissemination of cultural symbols, but also the careful filtering and selection of a digital environment to ensure that the empowered users of the web are comfortable and unchallenged.

Obviously, I am a believer in reading books. But I have also danced, sung, played music, watched television and spent far too much time mucking around with videos and DVDs. I have a dense dedication to my I-Pod. In such an intricate environment of visual, sonic, tactile and olfactory stimulation, literacy has fragmented into multi-literacy. What was 'literacy' fifty or one hundred years ago is simply not sufficient to interpret an information-saturated and mixed media world. Print is no longer enough. Sean Cubitt, having watched the explosion of video recorders in the 1980s, realised that

Video's readers are already intensely 'literate.' The codes and conventions of moving-image media, now almost a hundred years old, are dense and complex. I would argue that there is a kind of Chinese Box effect in the history of twentieth-century media, TV subsuming film, video subsuming TV.²⁹

29 S. Cubitt, *Timeshift: On video culture*, (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 3.

The Chinese Box continues through digital television and DVDs. We need to teach children, adults, students and citizens how to be literate in many media and textual forms, and how to evaluate and balance their potentials, weaknesses and strengths. These technological ensembles are interconnected media that are organizing society in new ways. Inter-personal relationships are being mediated by telephones, emails and instant messaging. They were similar mediations in the analogue environment by letters, cards and flowers. To repeat: the problem is not popular culture. The concern is that teachers and librarians are not being given a chance to instruct the literacies required to transform the web, I-Pods and DVDs from leisure applications into the starting point for a critical and reflexive research process.

Nearly twenty years ago, Carolyn Marvin published a fascinating book titled *When old technologies were new*. The title alone demonstrates the prescient nature of her argument. She showed that 'we are not the first generation to wonder at the rapid and extraordinary shifts in the dimension of the world and the human relationships it contains as a result of new forms of communication.'³⁰ Social change is always accompanied by a nostalgic desire for simplicity and continuity. Such a desire is understandable and carries forward an important lesson. Instead of demarcating new from old media, teachers and librarians must focus on how we extend and develop already-held knowledge and competencies. Every 'new medium' emerges from another: every 'new literacy' is grafted from a precedent analytical skill. Marvin mobilised this argument, confirming that 'the early history of electric media is less the evolution of technical efficiencies in communication than a series of arenas for negotiating issues crucial to the conduct of social life.'³¹ Popular culture is a thinking space, an opportunity to reassess our values, skills and literacies, and to test our commitment and desire to seek out alternative views and voices. There is no 'revolution' in media technology, just revelations in ways of organizing society.

The integration of student popular culture into the curriculum and library resources allows students to feel comfortable in their textual environment, while being challenged to develop new analytical skills. If both the text and literacies are foreign, then our students for whom a school or university is disconnected from the experiences of their family and friends are further alienated from the curriculum. There is a reason for perpetuating this disconnection. Shelly Hong Xu stated that 'teachers often shy away from student popular culture and feel that they have a moral responsibility of keeping popular culture out of the official school world.'³² Such an assumption continues the link between low literacy and social disadvantage. Actually the point of pop challenges the suppositions of librarians and teachers as much as students. Popular culture, when integrated into education and teacher training, prepares schools and universities for managing diversity. Gretchen Schwarz confirmed these challenges and potentials.

30 C. Marvin, *When Old Technologies were New*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 3.

31 *ibid.*, p. 4.

32 S. Hong Xu, 'Teachers' full knowledge of students' popular culture and the integration of aspects of that culture in literacy instruction,' *Education*, Vol. 122, No. 4, p. 721.

Today's teachers deal with diversity at every level. Many seem unprepared. Media literacy incorporated into teacher education and professional development may benefit teachers by helping them understand the 'other,' by helping them challenge media notions about gender, race, class, etc.; by introducing them to alternative pedagogies; and by offering them resources and techniques to empower their own students.³³

Choices about media value are political decisions. The benefit of education is that it provides alternatives, answers, views and trajectories in a political environment of blame and grievance. While these choices may not always result in economic benefits, it creates thinking space. The aim is to use the texts and contexts of our students and provide diverse ways of interpreting and shaping the history, geography and politics around them.

Learning is socially transformative. That is why phrases like 'the basics' and a determination of 'rubbish' require more attention and greater critique. We require new goals and structures to address systematic and structural exclusions in schools and universities.³⁴ To explore and renew a commitment to media education and popular cultural studies is a reminder of the revelatory impact of the best education and teaching differences:

From:

To: t.brabazon@murdoch.edu.au

Subject: Intro to Cultural Studies

Date: Tue, 03 Aug 2004 22:39:44 +0800

Ms. Brabazon,

Today's tutorial was so excited...I didn't have tutorial systems at my university in Japan.

So, I'm enjoying uni life here.

Today's topic was difficult for me, but I could think many things. Especially about culture or 'cultures'. I wanted to say about that question..., but I was so shy, I was stupid...

So, now I want to say my opinion a bit here... sorry.

I think each person has each culture, even though they're same nationality.

Cause we live our own life by ourselves and we're different person.

No one can live same way with me.

So, we should discuss about difference of cultures and we should know each other.

I had stereotypes before I come here, still now, I think I have.

Therefore, I'd like to change my mind and make wide my horizon.

That's all...

I'm interested in your lecture and tutorials.

So, as much as possible, I'd like to try to say my opinion in tutorial.

Teacher is the job of my dreams!!!

I want be a teacher (lecturer?!) like you, tara!

I'm looking forward to attend next lecture and join next tutorial.

Thank you for your kindness.

³³ G. Schwarz, 'Media literacy prepares teachers for diversity,' *Academic Exchange*, Spring 2004, p. 224.

³⁴ Barbara Comber revealed in 'Literacy, poverty and schooling,' *English in Australia*, Vol. 119, No. 30, 1997, that 'the myth that youth unemployment, poverty and crime are largely the result of low levels of literacy have come to be heard as the 'truth' in contemporary Australia. Admitting to being a teacher or teacher educator frequently unleashes a series of uninvited verbal attacks about what a lousy job teachers are doing and how young people can't spell, don't know what a verb is, and so on. Taxi-drivers, shop keepers, TV current affairs hosts and casual acquaintances all have horror stories to offer as evidence,' p. 23.

The demonisation of popular knowledge has repressed our students for too long. We have continued to isolate schools and universities from the lived experience of the citizens we are meant to be educating. Pop is a medium and method to manage classroom diversity and facilitate a critical interpretation of texts and contexts. There is a need to find a strategy to assist students who are not prepared for higher-level writing, reading and research skills. The first step is to transform consuming pop into thinking pop. The second stage is to demand that our political leaders read more.

Tara Brabazon is the Professor of Media in the School of Computing, Mathematics and Information Sciences at the University of Brighton and Director of the Popular Culture Collective. She is the author of six books: *Tracking the Jack – A retracing of the Antipodes* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2000), *Ladies who Lunge: Celebrating difficult women* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2002) and *Digital Hemlock: Internet education and the poisoning of teaching* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2002). Her edited collection, *Liverpool of the South Seas: Perth and its popular music* was published by UWA Press in January 2005. *From Revolution to Revelation: Generation X, popular memory, cultural studies* was published by Ashgate in March 2005. *Playing on the Periphery: sport, identity and memory* was released by Routledge in February 2006. tara.brabazon@popularculturecollective.com

Keeping public libraries on the agenda

*Victoria Anderson and
David J Jones*

To enhance the effectiveness of public libraries in pursuing their mission, library executives and library champions must ensure that they keep libraries on the agenda of their communities and funding bodies. This calls for a multi-faceted approach involving professional education and training, the right mix of services, well-structured advocacy, cultivating partnerships with government and private sector bodies, and innovative and forward-looking programs. The right image and appropriate environments for users – the right ‘platforms’ – are also critical to delivering outcomes of substance, value and relevance.

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TODAY ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT ARE FACED WITH COMPETING DEMANDS FOR THEIR attention and financial support. Although there is growing recognition of the significance of public libraries – as social capital, as arms of electronic government (eGovernment) and as players in the knowledge economy – library managers will need to take every opportunity they can to further the cause of their institutions. They need to ensure that public libraries are firmly on the agenda of their local authorities, and, through state and national associations, on the agenda of state and federal governments also.

Based on our experience working with public libraries, primarily in New South Wales, we have identified factors which can help keep public libraries on the agenda, whatever the political, economic or social environment. We believe that success lies in knowing clearly how the library service relates to its community and the roles which it can play. Whatever the environment, the vital factors are the right people, the right agenda, the right relationships, the right services and the right platforms.

The right people

People are the key asset: those who work in libraries but also those who, though not library workers, work on our behalf. These are library ‘champions’: members of the

community who sit on boards, do voluntary work, speak up on behalf of libraries within local government authorities, or are 'friends of the library'. Library workers and library champions are essential ingredients in our agenda-making. Our current and future staff are the people with the know-how and the acumen to help the library thrive. They enable the library to add value to the information process. They can look ahead and spot trends and meet emerging needs. They have 360-degree vision, can identify opportunities, have self-renewing motivation, and passionately believe in their work.

In order to continue to attract people like this into the profession we have to pay them well, train them properly and give them the right tools – not just the technical skills, but the people skills and organisational skills. We must nurture them and keep them challenged and motivated. Those already in the workforce may need their skills refreshed or sharpened, and their horizons may need broadening too. We can help them achieve this in a number of ways, by encouraging them to write for publication, to undertake research, to attend conferences and give papers. Perhaps they can travel and report back on their experiences, or organise or take part in seminars and workshops. They may be able to participate in internal or external fellowship programs or seek higher qualifications within the profession or in other disciplines.

State library authorities often facilitate access to professional development opportunities such as seminars and training courses for library managers on leadership, reference resources, library services to disadvantaged groups, library design, succession planning and a host of other topics. In NSW, for example, the staff of Public Library Services (a division of the State Library) prepare a professional development program each year, aiming to meet current needs and anticipate future demands. Professional development programs are also conducted by the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA), academic institutions with schools of library and information services and commercial organisations involved in the training and conference market. ALIA's professional development scheme has a formal program and a career development kit, and members can obtain discounts at approved training courses (ALIA 2006).

Part of professional development is inevitably a consideration of the role of library professionals in the 21st century. Coming to terms with and indeed exploiting the internet, for example, is a common thread in professional development. Programs can teach library staff to focus less on the technology itself and more on the human actions and interactions involved. They can learn how to be discriminating about information technology, how to embrace change and how to adapt traditional skills and knowledge in an online world. Professional development can also help library staff reinforce their marketing skills. In today's tight economic climate, with an ever-changing user population, we need to know and engage our market, question and evaluate the services and resources which we provide, and sell our ideas and services. In the process, project management skills are also coming to the fore. Today's library manager needs the ability to turn an idea into a sustainable reality through planning, research, marketing and evaluation.

We also need to develop skills in lobbying and advocacy, and this has not traditionally been a major part of formal library education. In the past the successful

persuaders usually learned their skills on the job and by observing other practitioners. Nowadays a more formal approach is needed – a focus upon getting the library message across to communities and communicating clearly with decision makers and champions. Networking is one of our greatest assets – librarians have a strong desire to network, co-operate, collaborate and share knowledge and experience. This is facilitated by e-mail and the internet, workshops and training sessions, job exchanges or placements locally and overseas, and mentoring across the profession. ALIA, for example, has a mentoring program for librarians and library technicians at the beginning of their careers, bringing them into regular contact with experienced and inspiring library workers (ALIA 2005). The skills that can be gained in such programs are priceless.

The library's advocates also need to be nurtured. These passionate champions have no axes to grind and no vested interests, but are committed to defending and promoting the library idea and ideal – the right and the opportunity of all citizens to access data, to gather information, to acquire knowledge and gain wisdom. We must identify them, keep them involved, value their contribution and channel their activities. Their reward will be the success of the libraries they champion: vibrant, lively, people-friendly, service-orientated, forward-looking, strategically focussed public places. These are the kinds of libraries which the champions and the library professionals will help to keep on the agenda.

The right agenda

What is the right agenda? We must look at government objectives and see how libraries fit or how we can make them fit. The library must align with the bigger agenda of the town, state and nation. Programs which do not clearly relate to a local authority's management plan, for example, find it harder to gain financial support – they may not be visible enough on the political and economic landscape.

A recent example of a state-wide plan is *A new direction for New South Wales*, a draft of which was launched in August 2006 at the beginning of a widespread process of community consultation. This plan is intended to define goals and outcomes which the NSW government and community together agree should shape public policy over the next decade. The draft identifies 29 priorities within four themes: respect and responsibility, improving services, growing prosperity across NSW, and environment for living. Whilst libraries are not specifically mentioned in the draft plan they will certainly play a key role under one or more of these headings as the plan becomes elaborated (New South Wales Government 2006).

Another example of a state-wide vision is *Growing Victoria together* (Victoria, Department of Premier and Cabinet 2005) which includes the following vision for 2010:

- thriving economy
- quality health and education
- healthy environment
- caring communities
- vibrant democracy.

Public libraries can play a role under each of these headings: lifelong learning, linking Victoria, building communities, reducing disadvantage, respecting diversity, providing information on protecting the environment, facilitating public participation and helping industry. This has been underlined by recent research conducted for the State Library of Victoria which focussed on community building: *Libraries building communities, the vital contribution of Victoria's public libraries* is an eloquent report which shows the relevance of public libraries to Victoria's broader agenda (State Library of Victoria 2005). On a smaller scale, identifying government priorities and agendas in *The Canberra Plan* has proved valuable for the managers of the Australian Capital Territory Library and Information Service, who serve a population of about 320 000 in and around Canberra (Australian Capital Territory 2005).

There may also be opportunities to link libraries with specific initiatives, policy statements or government programs. A good example is the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Library Extension Program (LEP). Under this program, which has operated since 1991, over five hundred libraries in Australia are able to provide free access to selected electronic statistical information from ABS. This service is offered, in ABS's own words, 'in recognition of the Australian library system as a nation-wide infrastructure uniquely suited to the role of making information available at the local level throughout Australia.' Training, educational and promotional services are also offered. It is a 'core strategy' enabling the Bureau to address its Community Service Obligation (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2005).

Libraries should identify particular government programs which fit their agenda, and where they can get something out of the process for their community. To be a real partnership it should not be one-sided with someone else getting all the benefit and you doing all the work. What may be a helpful trend for public libraries is the widespread 'triple bottom line' approach in government – social, environmental and economic reporting. Libraries, which can be called the 'intellectual street-lighting' of our communities, can claim relevance under all of these headings.

The concept of culture is sometimes added to reporting requirements to form the so-called 'quadruple bottom line'. In New Zealand, for example, local government legislation requires reporting against cultural as well as economic, social and environmental indicators.¹ Culture is yet another community force with which libraries can be clearly identified, and this is articulated, for example, in the Cultural Accord between the NSW government and the Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW.²

Libraries have roles to play across the whole range of national, state and local government activities. If one of a government's desired outcomes is a better-educated community, for example, the library can claim a valid place under that heading. The role of libraries in education is well established, and education is now a lifelong necessity. There have also been useful studies of the value of libraries in providing social capital – helping to build communities and creating a sense of community identity. A landmark report on social capital and libraries was commissioned by the State Library of NSW and published as *A safe place to go* (Cox 2000), and more recent studies have added to our knowledge (Hillenbrand 2005).

It is however possible to go even further than this. Qualitative arguments for libraries are now being supplemented by quantitative assessments of the value of libraries. This is not just the simple dollar value of collections. Value can also be based on the value of services provided to the client or user. We can show the cost of *not* providing a library service in social and cultural terms, and also in hard economic terms. What would be the cost to a community or a nation if there were no public libraries? What would users have to pay if there were no library, or if the services provided were only available from a commercial source? Who would meet the demand? By what factor would the cost to the individual, to the community and to the nation increase? Or looking at it a different way, what is the return on investment of a library service?

In the first study of its kind in the United Kingdom it was found that investment in the British Library pays huge dividends to the country. For every £1 of public funding the British Library receives each year, £4.40 is generated for the economy. If public funding of the British Library were to end, the UK would lose £280 million of economic value per annum. This study aligns investment in libraries with investment in the knowledge economy, information technology and research and development. It also identifies the value to the community through 'the indirect benefits of the world-class scientific research, creativity and innovation that is underpinned by the British Library (British Library 2005, 2005a).

One American public library has demonstrated a 620 per cent return on its community's investment in public libraries. This library used a cost-per-service formula covering circulation of books, videotapes and DVDs, reference questions answered, newspapers and magazines provided, programs attended, training given and internet access (Coffee 2005).

Until the day when every household has a computer terminal, a fast internet connection and someone to 'drive' the computer, the public library will play the role of 'virtual branch office' for many government departments and agencies. Library personnel are effectively fulfilling the role of departmental employees, helping clients to navigate diverse and inconsistent government websites. In 2005 the NSW Public Library Network Research Committee initiated an examination of the value of public libraries in the provision of eGovernment (Library Council of New South Wales 2006). The recommendations arising from the report are that the State Library, in conjunction with the NSW Public Library Network:

- liaise with government agencies, especially those of high impact on public libraries
- develop memoranda of understanding which acknowledge and fund the role of public libraries in providing access to, and delivery of, eGovernment information and services
- support and facilitate training for public library staff on eGovernment issues
- review information and communication technology (ICT) within the NSW public library network to assess the ability of the network to provide access to online information and services

- conduct follow-up research within three years [by 2008] to assess the ongoing impact of eGovernment on NSW public libraries and the ability of the network to respond to the demands created by eGovernment policies.

Taking a somewhat different approach, we can ask how much the community thinks their library service is worth. This is explored in the *Libraries building communities* study (State Library of Victoria 2005). Ten thousand residents of Victoria were asked to place a dollar value on the library services available to them. For large libraries the annual values which emerged were \$500 plus for a light user, \$4 000 per year for heavy book readers and \$7 000-\$10 000 for frequent users of a range of library resources. For smaller libraries the value given was \$200-\$300 for light users and \$1 000 for heavy users.

This suggested a *user-assessed* value of up to \$730 million for a large library system with about 150 000 users, from a current investment of around \$11 million. Of course, using figures such as these we need to ensure that the issue of preparedness and ability to pay is not confused with the extent to which a service is valued, a point which is not lost on the research team (State Library of Victoria 2005: *Report 2*, 43-44). Research in this area continues: in September 2006, following a first phase in which research approaches were reviewed (Berryman 2005), the NSW Public Library Network Research Committee endorsed a large-scale project to investigate and measure the contributions made by NSW public libraries to the communities they serve.

We need to get the message about the value of our services across in a convincing and consistent manner, using facts and figures, dot points which will lodge in a politician's mind, short 'grabby' sentences and human stories. How libraries have changed lives can be told in the words of the people themselves: the young student, the successful business person, or the thirty-something who could not have grown as a person without the intellectual stimulus of a library. This technique has been applied in *Libraries building communities*, which contains numerous short quotations from comments made by participants. But however good the message and however well we tell our story, we need an audience – the right audience. This is where the right relationships become important.

The right relationships

Libraries cannot operate in isolation. They rely upon funding from sources beyond their immediate control. In NSW, for example, about 90 per cent of public library funding is from the local authority. The remainder comes in the form of subsidies and grants from the state government. Relationships with funding authorities are therefore critical if libraries are to compete for a fair share of resources. With so many demands placed upon central and local government funds, libraries need to be in a position to demonstrate to decision-makers how important they are for their communities.

Local practice will determine how best to nurture relationships with decision makers. In some environments ALIA and the more recently formed entity Public Libraries Australia (PLA) have a significant role to play as lobbyists, as do the state-based library associations (Public Libraries Australia Limited 2004). Library advisory boards and committees, friends of the library and other community groups can also

be influential. A department head, Minister, Mayor or General Manager with a real awareness of the value of libraries is a great advantage.

Strategic partnerships can be forged with government departments, the private sector, other service providers or institutions to extend the reach of a library program, to improve infrastructure, or initiate a project which would not otherwise be funded. Such initiatives can benefit users directly, raise the library's profile and establish lasting relationships with other sectors. Some examples of partnerships entered into by the State Library of NSW are described below.

PictureNSW

With funding from the NSW Department of Commerce, the State Library has initiated PictureNSW, a long-term project to create an online digital image library for NSW public library local history collections and the State Library. So far the project has resulted in a directory, report and manual of digital practice (State Library of New South Wales 2004 and 2005a).

Summer Reading Club

State libraries in NSW, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria, Western Australia and the ACT have combined to present a national summer holiday reading program. This has two components: Summer Reading Clubs which children can join at their local library and an interactive website, where young people have opportunities to create and submit stories or artwork and have fun with games, puzzles and quizzes. The program grew out of the very successful 'Dive into a book' summer reading program run by the State Library of Queensland in 2003–2004.

AskNow!

AskNow! is a live online inquiry service operated jointly by national, state, territory and public libraries. In NSW six public libraries are actively involved. AskNow! clients have live access to reference staff who can provide information, referral and search assistance using online chat.

Legal Information Access Centre

The Legal Information Access Centre (LIAC) is a state-wide service providing free access to information about the law through the State Library and NSW public libraries. LIAC is jointly funded by the Library and the Public Purpose Fund. All public libraries provide access to plain language information about the law and about 80 library services have a wider range of information available, as well as staff trained by LIAC to provide assistance. (Legal Information Access Centre 2006).

Drug Info @ your library

Formerly known as di@yll (Drug Information at Your Local Library), Drug Info @ your library is a collaborative project of the State Library and NSW Health. The project forms part of the Community Drug Information Strategy and provides a range of drug and alcohol-related information to public libraries throughout NSW. Publications cover specific drugs and their effects, information on how to quit and guides for parents, carers and teachers. The website includes links to full-text resources (Drug Information @ Your Local Library 2006).

Health Information Service

The Health Information Service (HIS) has been set up to help consumers become more informed about health issues. It provides health information and is not intended to replace qualified medical advice from a health practitioner. Services are free and confidential. It is a joint initiative of the State Library, NSW Health and the NSW Nurses' Association. HIS provides access to a wide range of health information resources including recent consumer health publications, internet resources, health-related CD-ROM databases and journals.

There are also many opportunities for organisations or even individuals to assist with a particular program, by providing assistance in cash or in kind. Companies, organisations and individuals can benefit from an association with the library or with a range of libraries. In NSW, for example, the annual Marketing Awards for Public Libraries are supported by donations from library-associated suppliers. Local protocols, as well as ethical and legal considerations, will determine the extent to which such relationships will be developed. Many public libraries have already established sponsorship arrangements with local businesses, service clubs and community organisations.

We have not yet mentioned the key relationship which can develop between libraries and the media. The library is a source of newsworthy stories – a little culture, some history, something offbeat or simply a 'good news' story on a slow news day. The library can be the backdrop for an interview or provide information or images. Again, there are elements of identifying a shared agenda in all of these relationships, for the benefit of all parties.

The right services

To remain on the right agenda you need the right mix of resources and services. To identify these, you must first identify user and non-user needs – and of course many users may never actually walk through the doors of your library. Identifying target groups and their needs within the community requires patience, time and research funding. In NSW the public library research program benefits from the advice of a committee of library managers and engages professional and academic researchers to address current and emerging needs.³ The mix of services will vary from community to community. Each community needs to find a balance. There will be core ingredients – recreational reading materials, resources for study, children's services, internet access – and community-specific or value-added programs, resources and services. Care needs to be taken to ensure that libraries do not take on too wide a range of other community roles unless there is proper thought given to funding and demarcation.

In providing services we must also ensure that we are not all trying to reinvent the wheel, duplicating effort rather than co-operating at a local, state or national level, as the particular service may require. This is where our networking abilities will prove very valuable. Will the services provide the right outcomes? Are there niches where services can be provided in which you have particular strengths? Here is an opportunity to be innovative, to think outside the square. That's when you need to be aware of trends, to look forward and to position the institution strategically, so that it cannot fail to be on the agenda. That's one of the reasons why we

looking to the next generation of librarians, to make sure that they have the qualities libraries will need.

Once we have ensured our ability to provide outcomes of substance, value and relevance for our communities, we must ensure that awareness of what libraries can do is as wide as possible. At the local level library managers are able to achieve much. There can also be state-wide, national or international awareness raising programs, such as the '@ your library' campaign. This began as an American Library Association initiative and has now spread with local variations into many parts of the world, including Australia.⁴

ALIA partnered with @ your library during Library and Information Week 2006 and is looking at future partnerships. The NSW campaign 'look' has been adopted Australia-wide and a number of national campaigns are being planned, with funding secured for the next two years. Several new campaigns will be in collaboration with other agencies including:

- *statistics*, in partnership with the Australian Bureau of Statistics
- *find the past*, in partnership with Records NSW
- *on the move*, targeting home library services, mobile libraries and other outreach programs
- *sensational seniors*, and
- *good sports*.

Libraries are encouraged to adopt and use as many of the campaigns as they want, and to identify other events, activities and displays which can be 'badged' @ your library, for example: Chinese New Year, International Women's Day, Heritage Week, National Youth Week, Children's Book Week, National Simultaneous Storytime and International Volunteers Day. The @ your library website (www.atyourlibrary.sl.nsw.gov.au/index.cfm) contains ideas for events and activities, posters and bookmarks (which can be customised), tips on working with the media, interview techniques, an event management checklist, document templates, press releases and evaluation sheets.

A recent marketing campaign cooperatively mounted by public libraries in NSW focussed upon people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Multilingual signs, billboards on railway stations, advertising on buses, leaflets in 34 languages and postcards alerted people to what libraries have in store for them in their own languages. The resources available include multicultural collections in local libraries, reflecting the community languages spoken in the locality, and bulk loans in over 40 languages available from the State Library (State Library of New South Wales 2005b).

The right platforms

Even if all the other factors are right, things can go terribly wrong if you have the wrong platforms. Here we include electronic networks, hardware and software, as well as the physical library – the library building. We face challenges with these platforms. We are in a 'noisy' environment where a lot is happening. There are countless information, entertainment and infotainment websites. There are more

and more sophisticated and portable entertainment and communication devices with new technology constantly appearing. A library's internet presence is important and it relies upon robust infrastructure. If a website is slow, boring or frustrating to use, people will quickly click off, and it won't be bookmarked – the equivalent of being on someone's agenda. User trials are imperative and these have been a feature of the development of the State Library of NSW atmitchell.com website which went live in 2005. When fully developed, atmitchell.com, which is intended to be fun as well as functional, will provide users with access to a huge range of unique resources. In conjunction with atmitchell.com the Library has also launched Navigator, a specialised interactive web search tool. Navigator is currently available for NSW Higher School Certificate English but more topics are on the way (State Library of New South Wales 2006).

Of course we need to ensure that the right equipment is available in our libraries to meet the needs of the community. This is a challenge in rural and regional areas where telecommunications are frequently slow and unreliable. Several years ago, in an attempt to address this issue the State Library of NSW successfully applied for both state and federal government funding to improve internet infrastructure across the state. This resulted in the establishment of NSW.net, a network that links councils and public libraries throughout NSW to the internet. Ongoing annual funding for NSW.net is now committed from the state government. NSW.net provides councils and libraries with affordable access to the internet and has also provided over seven hundred PCs for internet access in public libraries. Public libraries and their clients also have free access to quality online information resources including the Health and Wellness Resource Centre, the ANZ Reference Centre, Australian standards and other databases.

The right building

How can our buildings help keep us on the agenda? Recent research on public libraries has underlined the importance of the library as a place, as an environment for our users and as a launching pad for our services. In highlighting the rise in on-site use of libraries in the United Kingdom, for example, Mark Wood, chairman of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council commented: 'We also need to make sure that libraries are the places people will want to continue to visit. Many library buildings have suffered years of under-funding and neglect. Libraries have managed to transform their services: now it's time for local authorities to give them the capital investment they need to stay ahead' (Museums, Libraries and Archives Council 2005).

A building which is poorly located, too small, unappealing externally, unattractive or old-fashioned inside, reflects badly on the service which we offer. However marvellous our collections, however innovative and groundbreaking our services, however good our technology, a problem building detracts from the message we are trying to get across. A recent House of Commons report noted 'that a significant barrier to library use was shabby buildings, whether inside or out' (Great Britain House of Commons, Culture, Media and Sport Committee 2005: vol 1, p 31). The 'Love Libraries!' campaign in the United Kingdom has been an eloquent demonstration of the drawing power of an attractive library. This project transformed three public libraries in twelve weeks and has been hugely successful in creating reading-centred library services out of tired, dated, inadequate facilities (Love Libraries 2006).

Local experience too tells us that a smart new building, or an older building which has been updated, will certainly attract more users. A library which recently reopened in a former supermarket in the main street of a NSW inland city reported that the number of new borrowers has trebled. The number of people coming through the door has jumped from a hundred to over three hundred per day. Fifty per cent more preschool children are attending storytelling. Circulation is up 50 per cent. Computer use has more than doubled. Months after the official opening there is no sign of business slowing down.

What is the right site for the library? Few sites are perfect, especially in urban areas, where land prices are high and few sites are available, but key criteria are visibility, accessibility and proximity to other facilities where large groups of people congregate. Visibility to as many people as possible is vital: tucked away in a back street or in an obscure part of a shopping mall the library will find it hard to stay on the agenda.

In the past it was common to see community facilities scattered all around the local government area. Nowadays good sites for libraries are scarce, so the possibility of co-location with other community facilities is worth examining. One complex can be easier to construct, secure and maintain than several. Sharing car parks, foyers or other common spaces can make economic sense. Co-located facilities may be more convenient for the community. They may also enable a wide variety of people visiting other facilities to be drawn into contact with the library on a regular basis. Co-location is bringing local government into co-operative arrangements with state government or other bodies – there is more than one example of a library sharing a building with a police station or health centre. The NSW Parliament recently conducted an inquiry into joint use and co-location of local government facilities with state government buildings. It is too early to gauge the impact of this report, but libraries were on the Committee's agenda, figuring very prominently in the case studies and tables of projects (New South Wales Parliament Legislative Assembly 2005; Jones 2004). Co-location is also one of the strategies being pursued in the United Kingdom (Great Britain House of Commons, Culture, Media and Sport Committee 2005: vol 1, p 33).

What is the right size? Although in the 1990s there was something of a retreat from standards for library floor areas around the world, there are still publications which provide firm guidance on the minimum floor areas needed to serve a particular population or to provide a particular range of services. In *People places: a guide for public library buildings in New South Wales* guidelines have been provided to help calculate the minimum floor areas needed (Library Council of New South Wales 2005). We call these population-based and service-based 'benchmarks', but they are really standards. The State Library of Queensland has also issued revised *Guidelines and standards for Queensland public libraries* (State Library of Queensland 2006) which include library building standards.

What is the right *image*? Each community will have a feel for what is best in its own locality. Community consultation will generate a healthy range of 'visions' of the library to which the architect will be able to respond. Libraries are inclusive, so their buildings need to be welcoming to a wide range of users of different ages and

backgrounds. No-one should feel that the library is not 'their place'. Public buildings need to uplift the spirits and inspire, as well as remain functional and adaptable as the years go by. Funding a new library building and providing ongoing funding for its operation and maintenance is not easy. In NSW, for example, sole responsibility for providing library buildings lies with the local government authority. To help encourage them to undertake library building projects limited funding, up to a maximum of \$200 000, is available on a competitive basis under the Library Council of NSW Library Development Grant program. Depending on the particular project there may also be other sources of state or Commonwealth grant funding.

Some local authorities include a revenue-generating component such as a café, bookshop, gymnasium or other commercial space. But funding issues do not disappear when a building is complete – there are ongoing operational costs – and of course a more popular building will result in increased demand, which must be factored into the equation. How can a building project keep libraries on the agenda? Depending on the size of the project, you can plan events and publicity around ground-breaking, laying the foundation stone, 'topping out' (when the building reaches its highest point), soft openings and sneak previews, moving the first book or computer into the new building, the official opening and open days.

Conclusion

These are just some of the ways you can help keep your library on the agenda. You can draw strength from the knowledge that the library continues to be popular and widely respected. The respect which communities have for their libraries and their library staff would be the envy of any commercial organisation. Of course the library executives and library champions of today and tomorrow have a challenging task ahead of them. But they also have a wonderful product to sell: the library, a physical hub of diverse communities, an educational, social and economic powerhouse and a symbol of a dynamic and well-rounded society.

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Note: All internet addresses were accessed on 3 September 2006.

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Endnotes

- 1 See Schedule 10 of the *Local Government Act 2002* (New Zealand).
- 2 The third Cultural Accord was signed in NSW in January 2006. It recognises the partnership between State and local government in the development of arts and culture at a local level. In the words of the Minister for the Arts, the Hon Bob Debus: 'The Accord recognises the important cultural collections held by local government, encouraging greater integration of the operation of cultural facilities including libraries, museums and art galleries.' http://www.lgsa.org.au/resources/documents/cultural_accord_flyer_280206.pdf.

- 3 Reports of all recent NSW public library research projects are at <http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/pln/projects.cfm>.
- 4 The American Library Association @ your library website is at <http://cs.ala.org/@yourlibrary>. The campaign has been adopted by the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) and is being promoted by many national library associations as well as individual libraries and library authorities. For an indication of its spread see the IFLA website at <http://www.ifla.org/@yourlibrary/index.htm>

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Refereeing is a delicate business: we operate on a double-blind system [although it is not always possible to eliminate every hint of an author's identity without rewriting the contribution] so that neither party, author or referee, is normally aware of the others' identity. I say 'normally', because in some cases, and if referees are willing, a productive dialogue which has some of the aspects of mentoring, can be opened thereby. The referee's function is to advise the editor on the article's publishability: the approach should be constructive and aimed at enabling both the author and the editor to arrive at something which is publishable. One of the editor's principal objectives is to encourage and see into print fresh or novice contributors to the literature. It follows that articles sent out for review will inevitably reflect varying degrees of 'ripeness' and competence. It should also be noted that the text which referees will receive is 'raw' in the sense that it has not in any way been edited or prepared for print. *Nor is it the referee's function to do this.* The critical issue is the *content* of the article, in the broadest sense of that word: does it make a reasonable contribution to the literature and to the ongoing debates about the profession? Is the content accessible to the average reader? How, without rewriting the article, might it be improved?

The Journal comes out quarterly, which seems to suggest that about twelve weeks is the *maximum* time which should be taken in the review process: in practice, many referees turn material round in a fortnight, and in the editor's experience as a referee, this results in a certain freshness of approach. An article which is allowed to hang about on one's desktop for too long, or which is read too many times may inevitably induce, through no fault of its own, a certain staleness into the referee's report. Like Roquefort cheese, the referee's report needs to be fresh, tangy and unpasteurised.

John Levett, Editor, ALJ

Using wireless devices to enhance reference and information services

Ellen Forsyth

A growing number of libraries have installed wireless data connections as a way of providing access to the Internet for members of the public. Some libraries have used their wireless networks to enable staff to use wireless devices to increase their mobility, effectiveness and responsiveness to client need particularly in providing reference and information services. This paper will look at some of these innovative applications of wireless data technology in libraries.

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AN INCREASING NUMBER OF PUBLIC AND UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES HAVE INSTALLED WIRELESS connections as a way of providing access to the Internet (including access to library catalogues and subscription databases) for members of the public or for university students. The libraries provide the Internet connection and the library patrons provide their own hardware to access these resources. This is happening in Australia as well as in other countries.

Very little is being written about the additional uses to which this wireless technology can be put to. Most of the information for this paper has come from listservs (electronic mails lists) and by e-mailing individual libraries, because not much is being published in the area of value adding to wireless services. Nor are there many examples to look at in this area of service delivery. A small number of libraries in the US and Canada are leading the way, some because they have a history of being early adopters of technological innovations, and others because the library staff have had to work out how to continue to provide a quality reference service with significant reductions in staff numbers. There are a limited number of small scale trials for additional uses for wireless technology.

Medical libraries were early adopters of wireless technology. One reason for this is that hospitals in developed countries are already high-tech environments. This has led to PDAs (personal digital assistants) being used extensively in medical libraries. (Solomons, 2004)

This paper specifically looks at how wireless technology can enhance the delivery of reference and information services. It aims to look at public library developments with a number of references to university libraries, which are using a very specific aspect of wireless technology because they have large area wireless networks.

Roving laptops

The simplest way of using wireless to enhance reference and information services is to take a laptop out of the library, or to a different part of the library, to provide a reference service. A campus-wide wireless network at a university is an ideal way of being able to do this, and was the starting point for thinking about additional creative and effective uses for this technology by library staff from a customer service perspective

Taking laptops out and about is particularly suited to university libraries. Campus-wide wireless networks have been installed so that students (and staff) can access crucial course-related data regardless of their physical location on the campus. They can work collaboratively regardless of location and library resources can be accessed over a much larger area. Staff are able to take wireless-enabled laptops to cafés or to particular faculties when there is a campus-wide wireless network. This approach has been taken at some Canadian universities: at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia laptops provide a reference service outside the library; at the Queen Elizabeth II Library at the Memorial University of Newfoundland library staff also use the roving wireless service to provide reference services, and to promote other services which are available from the library.

The Simon Fraser University service has been described as follows:

A team of six librarians staff the service with very minimal equipment. Currently we're using a mobile AV cart, a laptop with wireless access, two chairs and three signs. Given the number of electronic resources available to us, we are able to provide virtually (!) the same level of reference service that is given at our regular reference desk. If something comes along outside of our subject expertise that we can't answer, we refer to the librarian for that subject area... students seem to enjoy the more collegial atmosphere provided by being able to sit down beside us. Our reference desk doesn't have that feature. (Graebner 2005)

This use of wireless networks has the lowest start-up cost as there may already be a laptop within the library which can be used for this purpose. Smith and Pietraszewski (2004) have written about a short trial of this methodology conducted at West Campus Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

Roving PDAs (and other hand-held devices)

The next variation of this method of providing reference and information services is to use hand-held wireless devices which are smaller than laptops. Personal digital assistants (PDAs) are small hand-held devices, often no larger than an average adult hand. They can be used to search the internet, library catalogues and other databases, as well as functioning as mobile telephones. They use battery power and can be operated with a stylus or a keyboard. This approach is more likely to require

the purchase of hardware as appropriate hand-held devices are not likely to be in a library unless there is a specific need for them. Roving PDAs have been used by public libraries.

An enhanced reference service can be as simple as the purchase of one PDA. For example the Friends group of the Lawrence Headquarters Branch of the Mercer County Library in New Jersey purchased a PDA for the library. It is being used to test a roving reference service at the main library, as a Systems Administrator reports:

I think the biggest drawback is trying to get the staff to remember to use it... So far we have used the PDA as an aid when we take a patron from the reference desk to the stacks – we connect to the catalog over our wi-fi network to check an item's status or look up additional information. It is also helpful on those busy weekends when a librarian wanders off into the stacks with one patron, then gets bombarded with other questions, the PDA is such a help as it eliminates the trip back and forth to the desk or an iPAC station [web-based OPAC]. In addition to helping patrons, we have had librarians use the PDA to help when weeding books (so they can look up copy information on a particular title) and to take out to the magazine stacks when they update the Excel spreadsheet we use as a union list of serials. (Nawrociak 2005)

The PDA can be used when the main internet connection is down as the wireless network is separate from the main network. This roving reference model (also discussed in a paper by Terence K Huwe 2003) allows the enquiry to be handled anywhere in the library rather than being tied to a fixed point.

The King County Library System, Washington State has been experimenting with the use of different kinds of PDAs and tablets for staff use so that a roving reference service can be provided and the catalogue checked when staff are away from a fixed service point. Tablets are A5 sized (or larger) touch-sensitive screens, which display much the same information as computer monitors: they can be docked and used with keyboards, or use handwriting recognition. They have featured on the television series 24.

All 43 King County Libraries have wireless technology for internet access for the public. Barbara Pitney, Reference Services Co-ordinator wrote:

We tried using a number of different devices (tablets, PDAs etc.) with the hope that such devices would help roving staff access our OPAC. We found that our tablets were too heavy, awkward, cumbersome to carry and the batteries needed constant recharging. When we mounted them on columns, they were stolen. Staff also feel that screens/keyboards on PDA devices are too small when working with patrons in a roving environment. Staff are also concerned about having to carry (and possibly lose) something in their hand when scheduled to rove since not everyone wears clothing with pockets. Consequently, only a few staff members are continuing to use PDAs while roving. In those cases, they are using the PDA to simply look up a call number in OPAC rather than try to work/show the patron how to use OPAC. (Pitney 2005)

Other library services such as Westerville Library in Ohio use a combination of PDAs, tablets as well as wireless telephones which are described later in the paper. Westerville used their wireless connection to replace a large reference desk with a much smaller one. One staff member stays near the desk and the other roves around looking for people who need assistance.

Our patrons really like it. They do not feel like they have to navigate the stacks alone and appreciate us coming to them. Also, those who would come in and not find what they want do not just leave...we usually get to them before that happens. Finally, they also do not feel shuffled from department to department when we take them and take care of what they need. (Mabelitini 2006)

Wireless technology is not just for university libraries and larger public library systems. It works well for small libraries, including the Stowe Free Library in Vermont and the Hopkins County Madisonville Public Library in Kentucky which have a wireless-enabled laptop or a PDA so that staff can move through the library and help the public without having to go back to a fixed service point.

Roving with wireless telephones

Another way of using the wireless network involves wireless telephones for staff. Wireless telephones are headsets which fit over the head, or sit on one ear and have an attached microphone. Similar devices are often seen with Bluetooth-enabled mobile telephones.

While some of this technology may be new to libraries it is not new to businesses. Office Max, a US-wide network of shops like Officeworks, provides staff in some locations with wireless-enabled headsets and has done so for several years. These allow staff to communicate with one another to improve customer service. For example, a person may walk into a shop and ask for assistance. They will be referred to a specific aisle and by the time they reach it there should be another staff member waiting who has already been briefed on the client's needs, saving the client from repeating him/herself several times before actually receiving help.

Some US and Canadian public libraries are also embracing this technology. Several years ago the Phoenix Public Library in Arizona tested wireless devices for staff. The trial was not successful as the devices were not very user-friendly. Although the telephone headsets used wireless technology they had an ear-piece connected by a wire to a device which was attached to a belt. The connecting wire caught on things as librarians were walking around, causing discomfort as the earpieces were wrenched off their ears. (Phoenix Public Library 2006)

The technology has improved dramatically since then. In the last few years the Richmond Public Library in British Columbia has provided reference desk staff with wireless headsets. The aim of these is not for mobility of staff away from the desk, but to provide a hands-free typing environment when people are dealing with telephone reference enquiries. This is a basic use of the technology which offers some improvement to occupational health and safety of the staff; it may not make a significant difference to customer service experience for the public.

The King County Library System has also been using wireless headsets for staff on service points since September 2004. These have proved popular as it is possible for a telephone to be answered anywhere in the library by a person equipped with the headset. Staff can help a client and answer a call without having to return to the service point.

Roving with other wireless devices

A few public libraries are using wireless communication as a way of keeping staff in touch with each other over a very large floor area. It allows a staff member to provide reference assistance even if they are not standing in front of the customer who is being helped. They can be recalled to the service point when required, or can be asked for their input at a distance. It makes it much easier to provide a roving reference service, and ensures that people who are waiting at a fixed service point are also helped. The enhanced communication assists staff to provide an effective reference service to their community without having to stay at the service point.

Seattle Public Library's shape (it has a central book spiral) and size (at about 33 720 m² it is about the size of two Melbourne Cricket Grounds) posed challenges to service delivery. Library staff had to rethink how reference and information services were going to be provided to library patrons. Seattle opted for a system developed and marketed by Vocera for communication between staff on service points. This wireless device, about the size of a name badge, is worn around the neck, like an identity tag.

The device works with plain language commands. It has an address book of all the people on the same network which can be accessed by talking to the device. You can log in and log out using plain language commands. To make a call you just have to clearly say the name of the person you are trying to ring, the device will confirm the name and then make the call. It takes much less time to make a call than it takes to describe how to do it.

The device can be used to talk with people without having to use fixed-location devices. The units allow staff on service points to communicate with each other, with their supervisors and with staff who are not at service points. This means that you can access the expertise of staff wherever they are. It is simpler than a telephone call to a fixed point as you are sure to reach the person you are after and even easier to use than a mobile telephone. As it is worn it can't be put down and forgotten.

Marilyn Sheck of Seattle Public Library describes how the Vocera devices facilitate an effective reference service:

Our reference model first directs patrons to a general reference desk, where the majority of questions are answered on the spot. However, when the question requires more in-depth resources than those available in that reference area, staff need to either forward the question on to colleagues in other parts of the building or request that materials be sent to their area. We also want our staff to be mobile and not tied to a reference desk. We'd like them to be more pro-active and not just sit waiting for a question to come their way. The traditional desk-bound telephone won't work well for us in this building because of the size of the floor plates and the fact that our non-fiction collection is shelved on floors that are a square spiral (think parking garage ramps) so the two sides of each level are split off from one another. We looked at cell phones but they don't work well in a large concrete and steel building and there are considerable ongoing charges; we looked at walkie-talkies but they don't have much functionality other than set-to-set communication; we looked at wired phones with portable handsets but they don't have enough range and also have ongoing charges. Vocera was the tool that seemed to meet our needs. (Sheck 2006)

The wireless communication devices allow staff to provide a more effective and responsive reference service. They facilitate a roving reference model of service delivery by allowing staff to request assistance quickly and easily.

The new central library in Minneapolis also uses Vocera technology. During the last four years, because of funding cuts, the library has lost approximately one-third of its staff (across all library service points). When the new library opened 20 May 2006 they had to be ready to provide innovative and effective reference services with a smaller staff and a bigger floor area. The new central library is about 32 500 m².

All the public service staff in the central library have their own Vocera devices which they wear at all times. They log in to the Vocera system when they arrive each day, log out when they leave and devices are placed in a recharging unit so that they will be ready for the next day. It is possible to 'mute' the unit when you are in a meeting, and anyone trying to contact you can leave a message. It can even interface with the telephone system. Each floor of the Minneapolis Public Library is over 5 100 m² and the Vocera devices allow the two to three staff on each floor to manage the provision of services the public effectively (Bush and Reed 2006). One staff member described them as a 'life saver'.

This method of communication is used in the main library of the Orange County Library System (OCLS) in Florida. It has also been extensively used in hospitals in the USA as it allows staff treating patients to communicate with others and to be communicated with as well. Blacktown Hospital in New South Wales is the only location in Australia currently using Vocera devices, following a trial period. The company's press release quotes the Emergency Department Director Dr Michael Hession as saying

Vocera is a significant part of our armament... It addresses communication within the emergency department and gives another level of sophistication to communication with departments outside emergency. It is an efficiency gain for us, and it is an efficiency gain for patients. (Vocera Communications 2006)

The Vocera devices have worked so well here that they are likely to be implemented in other area health services.

Costs

Each of the uses of a wireless network has some start-up costs. The largest cost is often going to be the implementation of the wireless network. The roving laptop model used by some universities potentially has the lowest additional start-up cost as the only hardware required is a laptop, which may already be owned by the library. The next model involves the use of various hand-held computer devices, whether PDAs or tablets. These start at about \$400 each. Depending on the device chosen, this could permit a relatively low-cost trial of a wireless roving reference model provided the wireless network is already implemented. The costs for wireless telephony vary. One would need to decide between a wireless telephone system, or a voice-activated system like Vocera and price these options. For example Vocera, devices cost about US\$400 each, and there is an annual network fee to pay as well.

Benefits

The use of wireless devices, whether taking laptops to a particular faculty or using a PDA to be able to search for titles while away from a fixed service point, can really enhance the provision of reference services. The addition of devices like those produced by Vocera or wireless telephony allow the services to be taken to where they are needed.

The wireless devices complement the trend to smaller fixed service desks as they allow staff to communicate effectively with each other without face-to-face contact. In a really busy library it can allow the shift supervisor to reallocate staff as required. It will be interesting to see how these innovations will be adopted in public libraries across Australia. There may already be trials of wireless roving reference services occurring in Australia, but if so they are not being widely reported. As the number of wireless networks in public libraries increases this will open the possibilities of using the technology to enhance reference and information services. It will allow intelligent value-adding to take place. This has the potential to make more effective use of existing resources and to improve customer services without requiring additional staff.

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An invitation to contribute

The *Australian Library Journal* is ALIA's journal of record. As such it reflects a cross-section of issues critical to the profession at any given time. Published continuously for over fifty years it now represents the most substantial and significant archive of thinking in the established and the evolving professions that over time have comprised the membership of ALIA. Ground-breaking discussion, controversial papers, the narrative of professional practice and the evolution of the Association itself are all reflected in its pages. The catalogue of authors whose work has appeared in it is an honour roll. Many whose first tentative reflections appeared there have gone on to become notable contributors to the literature that is the foundation of all mature professions.

The *Journal* is open to contributions from students, interested lay people, practitioners, researchers, educators, whether in Australia or overseas. Its pages are not restricted to work by members of the Association. Publication in the *Journal's* refereed pages is an asset in any cv or job application.

In its fifty-fourth year, the *Australian Library Journal* invites contributions from the wide range of interests in the field. Previously unpublished writers and established authors are welcome to discuss possible contributions with the Editor, John Levett, PO Box 74, Middleton Tasmania 7163, phone or fax 03 6292 1699, e-mail jlevett@southcom.com.au

Providing library resources to 37 medical students at eight remote sites across 2600 km

*Simon Lewis,
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J Campbell Murdoch*

The University of Western Australia's Rural Clinical School was set up to train a quarter of the medical students for a full year in rural and remote Western Australia. These students need full access to the resources of the medical library so that they are not disadvantaged in comparison to metropolitan students. Setting up library access for small numbers of students across eight sites separated by thousands of kilometres comes with its own set of difficulties. Broadband internet allows access to journals and online books and selected books are provided for each site. Government, Faculty and School policy has facilitated this by ensuring financial resources are available to follow the students.

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AUSTRALIA EXPERIENCES MAJOR SHORTAGES OF DOCTORS IN RURAL AND REMOTE AREAS. IN an attempt to alleviate this, the Commonwealth government has provided funding to ensure that up to 25 per cent of medical students spend at least one full year of their training in rural and remote areas. It is hoped that they will appreciate their experience in the country and will subsequently choose to live and work in rural communities. At the same time these students need access to the library resources that their metropolitan colleagues have in order that they are not disadvantaged academically.

This article details the collection development initiatives at each of the Rural Clinical School (RCS) sites, the steps that were followed when building the collections, and considers the strength of the extant collections both in print and in the electronic environment

The context

Academic libraries have changed dramatically during the past decade. Reference collections and bound volumes of indexes of peer-reviewed literature have been transformed into networked databases available via the World Wide Web. The benefits are overwhelming: desktop access; keyword searching; combined author and keyword searching; limiters that include date ranges and language preferences; and, in some instances, the inclusion of or linking to the full-text of the articles retrieved. The networked environment provides challenges as well: resources and services tend to be more expensive; measuring and evaluating these resources is problematic; and, in most libraries, networked resources operate alongside traditional services (Samson et al 2004). In addition we find some students reluctant to become computer literate.

As a consequence of the digital revolution much attention has been focused on information organisation, representation (with its resulting meta-data), retrieval and use. However, the extent to which this will benefit information users depends on the collections of content thus exploited. (Edgar 2003) The digital revolution provides a major challenge for libraries attempting to provide services to rural and remote areas as internet services are often not reliable and are sometimes intermittent, especially if downloads are large, a search strategy extensive and the service delivery keeps dropping out.

The context of the RCS

The University of Western Australia (UWA) Library services over 18 000 staff and students. Of these, a small group is based outside the Perth metropolitan area. Through the RCS, a quarter of UWA 5th year medical students (37 in 2006) spend a year living and working in regional areas of the state, including remote Aboriginal communities. The RCS currently has nodes in Kalgoorlie, Esperance, Port Hedland, Albany, Geraldton and Broome (Table 1).

Table 1: RCS sites and populations

Site	Distance from Perth (km)	Population	No of RCS students 2006
Broome	2250	15 000	7
Port Hedland	1650	15 000	4
Karratha	1535	11 000	3
Geraldton	425	20 000	4
Kalgoorlie	600	35 000	10
Albany	410	52 000	6
Esperance	720	14 000	3

The federal government, as part of their contract with the university, required that 95 per cent of the funds allocated be spent in rural and remote areas and that they not be absorbed in general university infrastructure costs, thus freeing the RCS to spend on library resources to be held at the individual sites. As a result students have been able to see and handle the resources in the same way as they would in the metropolitan medical library, thus alleviating the sense of isolation that can occur when thousands of kilometres away from the resource base.

Library collections have been developed from the School's inception. Books housed in each of the RCS collections initially reflected the curriculum requirements for the 5th year of the medical course, which rests on a strong base of information. The RCS first began teaching students in 2002 but numbers were limited (seven students) and they were only in the rural setting for three months. By 2003 resources were required for the first full-year cohort with the aim of providing the essential texts in print format for the students to use while working and studying in the RCS sites. Electronic access to the university's collection of journals was arranged: this has a number of benefits for the students and staff. Full-text databases make access to core journal material faster and more convenient. As the number of relevant journals continues to increase, libraries are now adding mediated and unmediated document delivery services, electronic subscriptions, and pay-per-view options in attempts to expand their base of journal offerings while attempting to control costs (Brandsma et al 2002). As the RCS has developed, each site has continued to receive core resources as purchased for the metropolitan students: in addition, the collections at each of the sites have started to reflect the needs of each local setting and Aboriginal health resources have been purchased in high numbers for the Broome and Derby sites.

While it is convenient to provide scholarly information in digital format, many of the staff and students of the RCS indicated that they preferred hard copy of books, monographs and journals but this is not economically feasible. The shift from print to electronic access has been strongly promoted to staff and students across the UWA and a large number of print subscriptions have been cancelled in favour of the electronic format, which incidentally reduces the differential between students in the metropolitan area and those in remote areas. As there are often no hard copies of particular journals anywhere in the library, there is no disadvantage to the student in Derby as opposed to the student on the main campus.

At the same time, however, physical collections at each of the RCS sites continue to increase in size as monographs are supplied to meet the information needs of the medical co-ordinators and students. Electronic books have also been made available. At the start of 2006, 41 medical titles are available for viewing via the BooksatOvid platform and initial feedback has been favourable. Even so, providing resources to remote centres offers a number of special challenges. The distance between the Perth metropolitan area and the sites ranges from a few hundred kilometres to several thousand. Where library resources have to be mailed or couriered, delays occur and journal articles are often faxed. In situ, resources need to be protected against the harsh environmental conditions experienced at several of the sites: in the summer months the daily temperatures in Port Hedland and Karratha are often in the mid-40s and books taken out of an air-conditioned environment can be subjected to extremes of heat, humidity and sometimes, to insect attack. A book taken to an outback clinic might be left in a car in temperatures above 60 degrees.

One of the structural issues that had to be addressed was just how the books were to be housed and tracked. In most sites where there are multiple accommodation units for students (that is in sites where there are more than three students), books are kept in the RCS site office. In sites where there are only three students there may be no regional site office. Students work in their accommodation and the library is kept in the sitting room/ study area of their house. Where student numbers are

small (less than six or seven) an honour system has worked well. In three-student sites, they form their own rules of access. On sites where the numbers are larger, students are finding that the honour system is not entirely satisfactory; one of the tasks in 2006 is to identify and implement an improved tracking system for the next academic year.

The RCS made an early decision to make the best possible broadband internet access available at each site for curriculum and social support. Internet connections in regional areas in Western Australia are often problematic. The RCS has excellent connection speed in the site offices and student accommodation, and their broadband connections are often the best in the local community. This year's evaluation has shown that computer downtime is still frequent but has only been a problem to students on a few occasions.

Evaluation of the strength of the collections at each of the RCS sites has not been completed in depth. Initial investigation suggests that the collections are as up to date as the metropolitan collections. Indeed, the RCS collection development has added significant resources to the metropolitan collection. A copy of all items bought for the RCS is also purchased for the metropolitan collection. As the University library continues to increase its electronic collections, these flow on to the RCS sites, which have desktop access. These collections were last ranked by *Conspectus* as a level 4 research collection.

The future

A strength of this program of regionalisation has been that government funding and faculty and school policies ensure that the funding follows the students, so that students are not disadvantaged. In fact, while university policy is to provide one book per 50 students, the largest number of students at any RCS site is only ten, with some as low as three. It is hoped that the research interests of the medical co-ordinators at the sites will influence the collections so that each will have a distinct collection of resources that could be shared across the RCS sites in the future.

Institutional effectiveness, defined as the process of planning, evaluating, and revising programs on a continual basis, has become a primary criterion in accrediting academic institutions. In the academic library, the collection management and development policy, ongoing collection assessment, and the revision of policy reflect the institutional effectiveness this cycle in microcosm. Collection assessment in regional and program accreditation is fundamental (Henderson et al 1993). As the discipline of rural and remote health continues to grow at the UWA, the resources held at each RCS site will be fundamental to the expansion of academic units in the discipline and will equip the School with the ability to conduct research without being entirely dependent on the resources housed in the Medical and Dental Library in Perth.

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Where are they now? A survey of Charles Sturt University library and information management graduates

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Charles Sturt University School of Information Studies undertook a graduate destination survey of students who had completed library and information management courses, both undergraduate and postgraduate, in 2003–2004. One hundred and twenty-three responses (from a total of 256 sent out – 48 per cent) were received and from these it was found that 87 per cent of graduates were in either full-time work or part-time work by choice. Less than 5 per cent were unemployed and looking for work. Nearly 75 per cent of those working were in ‘library’ jobs with only a small percentage in other information-related work. Three quarters of graduates had prior library experience with 65 per cent working in libraries during their study. Eighty-two per cent of graduates reported that their course of study had been useful or very useful in providing skills relevant to their current position. While generally, the results of the survey were very positive both for the individuals and for the profession as a whole, there was anecdotal evidence that suggested that inexperienced and/or older graduates found difficulty in gaining suitable employment.

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This is a refereed article

THE PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH WAS TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT THE EMPLOYMENT status of library and information management (LIM) undergraduate and postgraduate students who completed their qualifications from Charles Sturt University (CSU) in 2003 and 2004. It is intended to be the first step in a longitudinal study of graduate employment from these courses. Although CSU's LIM group has kept informal records about graduate employment in the past which have helped inform decisions about course marketing, it was felt to be important to undertake a more detailed and thorough survey in order to better evaluate the success or otherwise of course offerings. Thus another major objective of this study was to obtain data on students' perceptions of how enrolment in and completion of the CSU degree helped them find employment.

These students had all studied via distance education (DE); Charles Sturt University prides itself on being a leader in this field. The School of Information Studies (SIS) has been delivering librarianship and information management studies through this method for over 30 years. It comprises three distinct groups, library and information management (LIM), teacher-librarianship (T-L), and information technology. From 2007, following a faculty restructure, information technology will move into another school, leaving SIS as the only school dedicated solely to LIM and T-L studies in Australia.

According to Hallam (2006:5), who used data collected in the ALIA Annual Course Returns, in 2005 in Australia there were around 1550 students enrolled in LIM/T-L graduate programs and about 950 students enrolled in undergraduate programs. CSU Division of Planning and Audit figures indicate that in 2005, 570 undergraduate LIM students were enrolled (60 per cent of undergraduate LIM students in Australia), and 846 postgraduate students in LIM and T-L enrolled (54.6 per cent of postgraduate LIM/T-L students in Australia), making SIS very much the largest school in the country.

The total number of LIM/TL students graduating in Australia in the two years 2003–2004 (the years covered by this survey) was around 1000 for graduate courses and 470 for undergraduates (Hallam 2006:6–7), comparable with figures from a decade previously of 1048 and 303 respectively (Willard, Wilson and Pawley 2001). Of the total graduates for the 2003–2004 period, CSU's Planning and Audit returns indicated the university graduated 441 LIM/TL postgraduates (44 per cent of the total Australia wide), and 200 undergraduates (42.5 per cent) of LIM undergraduates in Australia (CSU 2006).

The current survey included only LIM graduates (graduates of T-L were excluded), with students from every state and territory in Australia. While there were also students graduating from countries such as New Zealand, Hong Kong and Mauritius, and small numbers of students in places such as Singapore, Fiji, Canada, South Africa, UAE, and USA, they were not included in this survey in order to focus solely on the Australian situation.

The CSU survey was adapted from Genoni and Smith's (2005) study of Curtin University's library and records management graduate employment outcomes, using similar questions. This enabled a level of comparison over time between the surveys and also provided a basis on which to build the survey instrument. The survey was

sent out to 260 CSU LIM graduates in November 2005. Graduates surveyed were from the Bachelor of Arts (Library and Information Science), Graduate Diploma of Applied Science (Library and Information Management), and the Master of Applied Science (Library and Information Management) programs.

Employment

In addition to graduate destination surveys dealing with study and employment outcomes (most notably Genoni and Smith), other recent studies have tended to focus on the skills required by employers of graduates. Kennan, Willard and Wilson (2006) analysed job advertisements for library and information studies (LIS) graduates in the *Sydney Morning Herald* 1974–2004. Their results found, as expected, an increased demand for computer and information technology skills. They also noted an increased demand for skills in information 'behavioural' characteristics such as teamwork and interpersonal skills, in addition to the need for 'traditional' competencies. Their results also indicated a decrease in positions calling for ALIA-recognised qualifications. Over the period, there was an increase in positions calling for previous experience.

Marion et al (2005), in a 2004 analysis of job advertisements in Australia and USA, reported similar results with the emphasis on the importance of good communication, team and interpersonal skills. They noted that, overall, employers in Australia and the USA are looking for 'many of the same skills and competencies'. Willard, Wilson and Cole (2003), in their survey of LIS graduates from the University of NSW 1997–2001, reported similar results, although they found a demand for cataloguing skills as well. Middleton (2003) surveyed graduates from Queensland University of Technology courses and identified a number of skills needed by graduates, covering areas such as communication, information service delivery skills and management skills. Myburgh (2003), in contrast to Bajjalý's similar US-based study (2005), concluded that information professionals need to be provided with high-level communication and interpersonal skills as well as managerial and IT skills to help them meet the demands of working in a rapidly changing world.

Thus one of the major aims of the current survey was to ascertain the relevance or otherwise of the CSU qualification in fitting our graduates for the employment market.

Methodology

In addition to the survey categories devised by Genoni and Smith and adopted here, students were encouraged to contribute free-text comments throughout the questionnaire about their experiences. This proved valuable in getting a more personal understanding of some of the findings and allowed students to expand on their responses.

Lists of 2003–2004 graduates were obtained from the division of Student Administration at the University. The survey was piloted in October 2005. One minor change was made after the pilot (relating to the terminology used for Field of Work categories). The final survey was then posted in November 2005 to 256 graduates residing in Australia. Inevitably, one of the limitations of a study based on student contact details two or more years old was that some of the students' addresses had

changed since graduation. No attempt was made to find new addresses, and the 12 surveys returned as 'address unknown' were discounted from the total.

The results were collated and SPSS software used to analyse the data. The free-text comments were also collated and reviewed as part of the overall evaluation process. As anticipated, they frequently provided a valuable insight into the thoughts and feelings of individuals.

Student cohort

Sixty-five responses were received from those completing the BA (49.6 per cent); 28 from graduate diplomates (43.1 per cent) and 30 from masters graduates (50 per cent), making an overall response rate for the survey of 48 per cent. Within this cohort, the majority of students completing were mature age (60 per cent in the 30–50 year old range) with only 20 per cent of those completing their qualification being 30 or under. Nearly 20 per cent were 51 or older. These figures were fairly constant regardless of the level of study (undergraduate or postgraduate).

This confirms Genoni and Smith's finding (2005:340) that 'the information professions attract a decidedly mature age group of students', suggesting that many people move into librarianship as a second career or are already working in the industry but upgrading their qualifications. For older graduates without that experience there were a number of responses commenting on the problems they faced. Thus one noted that 'as an older student I think I underestimated the difficulty of changing careers' with another concerned that 'it is very hard for mature-age people to obtain work in libraries as they are often overlooked in favour of 'young' graduates'.

The ABS Labour Force Survey (2005) also reinforces the view of librarianship as a generally 'grey' profession: librarians have a median age of 46, and close to 70 per cent are in the 35–54 age group. This contrasts with the rest of the workforce, which has only 46 per cent in this age bracket, making the ABS comment that 'librarians are markedly older than the average for Australian occupations'. Given this concern over the greying of the workforce, it is reassuring that 50 per cent of the respondents to this survey were under 40. It appears that this may be a trend, with recent figures for the undergraduate intake at CSU showing more than 60 per cent of new students under 40, with 30 per cent under 30 years old.

All of the courses are taught in distance mode and thus physical location should not really be an issue for students. However, Table 1 below indicates the very strong preponderance of graduates from NSW regional and city areas and very low numbers from Victoria, which might also be considered part of a natural catchment area for a campus based equidistantly between Sydney and Melbourne. While this is true for the period surveyed, recent admissions statistics indicate that later intakes have included much higher numbers of Victorian students (equivalent to Queensland), possibly indicating the impact of the closure of Victorian LIS undergraduate courses in recent years.

Table 1: Place of residence, all students (per cent)

	NSW	ACT	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	Other
Metropolitan	28.5	4.1	5.7	13.0	4.9	-	1.6	-	4.0
Non-metro	28.5	-	-	8.1	-	1.6	-	-	-
Total	57.0	4.1	5.7	21.1	4.9	1.6	1.6	0	4.0

Employment outcomes for LIM graduates

The survey showed that 66.7 per cent of respondents were in full-time employment. This compares to Genoni and Smith's (2005) results which found 70.5 per cent of graduates working full-time. More specifically, the CSU survey also found that 87 per cent of graduates were either in full-time employment, or in part-time employment by choice (20.3 per cent). In total, 26.8 per cent of graduates were in part-time employment (by choice or not), confirming that the librarian workforce has a large part-time component, although lower than the general total reported by Teece (2006) that 37 per cent of librarians were in part-time positions. In addition, more than one-third of CSU students who were employed while studying were in part-time positions. This is also noted by Hallam (2006:8) who reports that

Anecdotally, it appears that graduates often obtain part-time work in the first instance – either while still studying, or after completing the course – and secure full-time work within 6–12 months. In recent months, however, students in South East Queensland have reported that most jobs on offer are in fact for full-time work, and they would actually prefer part-time employment.

Government statistics show that librarians have a below-average proportion of full-time jobs (67 per cent), (Australian JobSearch 2005) and the current CSU survey supports this with 66.7 per cent of respondents in full-time employment. (See Table 2)

Table 2: Employment status (per cent)

	Undergraduate	Grad Diploma	Masters	All graduates
Full-time work	69.3	57.2	70.1	66.7
Part-time work (prefer full)	9.2	3.6	3.3	6.5
Part-time work by choice	16.9	25.0	23.3	20.3
Unemployed – not looking	1.5	0.8
Unemployed – looking	3.1	7.1	3.3	4.1
No response	..	7.1	0	1.6

Kennan, Willard and Wilson (2006) found that despite their expectations there was no evidence of an increase in the casual LIM workforce. This confirms the trend noted by Teece (1998) and Genoni and Smith, the latter stating 'that indeed there is evidence of a shift towards permanency rather than contract employment' (2005:345). This has been further confirmed by this survey, which indicates that for all graduates, the vast majority were in 'permanent' or tenured positions. (See Table 3)

Table 3: Form of employment (per cent)

	All graduates
Permanent/tenured	87.2
Limited term contract	6.0
Casual	6.8

Unemployment

A federal government website, Australian JobSearch (2005), reports that unemployment for librarians is low (2 per cent), which again is reflected in the survey outcomes shown in Table 2 with 4.1 per cent of respondents describing themselves as unemployed but actively looking for work. These results do not however, indicate whether graduates may have taken alternative work or accepted something a lot less than their ideal, as some of the additional comments received in the survey suggest: 'I am currently over-qualified but I am seeking a more appropriate position', or '...the Masters degree was not sufficient to gain employment as a LIBRARIAN'.

An interesting comparison can be made when isolating the responses from BA(LIS) graduates in this survey. In the Australia-wide Graduate Destination Survey (GDS), which surveys bachelor degree graduates only, the figure nationally for all bachelor graduates unemployed and seeking full-time employment in 2005 was 9.6 per cent. (Graduate Careers Australia, 2005:3). In the GDS for 2005 for CSU BA(LIS) graduates it was 2.2 per cent, and in this survey it was 3.1 per cent. As Table 4 shows, this is the best result for CSU graduates for several years, and significantly better than the national average. Unfortunately, the range of fluctuation over the years makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions from these results.

The much lower figure shown for 2005 is hard to explain but could be due to an improved response rate (93 per cent, with 62 out of 67 surveys returned) which returned an unemployment figure (2.2 per cent) closer to that found in the current survey (3.1 per cent). Both these figures support the findings of the Australian Job-Search survey of low unemployment for librarians.

Table 4: CSU BA(LIS) graduates available for and seeking full-time employment (Graduate Destination Survey)

Year graduated	Percentage seeking f-t employment
2000	10.0
2001	9.3
2002	8.0
2003	11.9
2004	13.3
2005	2.2

It should be noted that while the current survey sought information from graduates between 18 months and two years after completion, the GDS collects its data about four months after completion. Further, the GDS sample for CSU BA(LIS) each year comprises 30–60 returns, and has a response rate as high as 90 per cent (reflecting the short time period between graduation and survey) while for this current survey 65 undergraduate responses were received, around a 50 per cent return rate.

Genoni and Smith (2005) noted that between their two surveys there was an increase in full-time work and a decline in the number of those unemployed and looking for work. The number of graduates who had been employed 'continuously' or 'fairly continuously' improved to 83.2 per cent in their latest survey. The current CSU survey found that for all respondents, 95 per cent reported being 'continuously' or 'fairly continuously' employed – an impressive figure. This despite the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2005) reporting future job prospects for librarians as 'average'.

In the longer term (2010–11), Australian JobSearch reports that the employment prospects for librarians are expected to fall slightly.

This contrasts somewhat with the view expressed by Holt and Strock (2005) of the US situation that there is a 'cause for alarm...especially in finding an entry-level job'. Such anecdotal evidence is supported in Australia to some degree by some of the comments received in the survey and from recent discussions on a course forum where current CSU students discussed the difficulties of finding appropriate employment. Comments such as 'I had to be persistent and imaginative to get myself to this place'; 'People keep telling me that, in order to get a good position, I need to consider moving somewhere less "desirable"' and the common complaint of 'It's a perplexing situation; you need a job to get experience and you need experience to get a job' elicited strong support from other students on the forum. These discussions seem to reflect widely held views.

Field of work

Willard, Wilson and Cole (2003) noted that graduates are finding a 'range of information work' and that skill in information management 'increases performance in many positions'. However, the current survey reported 75 per cent of students describing their field of work as 'librarianship' with only small numbers employed in related information work. (See Table 5) This suggests that for most CSU graduating students, the traditional fields are still the predominant source of employment.

Table 5: Field of work, percentage of CSU students

Area of employment	Percentage of graduates
Librarianship	74.8
Computing	4.1
Records management	1.6
Other information related	7.3
Other	5.7
No reply	6.5

Level of work

The survey reported that the majority of graduates were employed at the professional level. However Table 6 indicates differences in employment levels between courses. One factor influencing the result may be the level of prior relevant work experience. Table 6 shows the high level of prior employment experience of undergraduates and Masters students compared to students undertaking the Graduate Diploma. This can partly be explained by the admissions criteria for the undergraduate degree which, amongst other criteria, calls for prior experience or prior relevant study. Masters students are generally upgrading their qualification, rather than undertaking initial training. This high level of prior experience also relates to the high proportion of older students undertaking all of the courses.

Table 6: Level of work since completion and prior work experience (percentage of graduates)

	Undergraduate	Graduate Diploma	Masters	All graduates
Professional	75.5	57.1	66.7	69.1
Para-professional	20.0	28.6	13.3	20.3
Non-professional information work	1.5	14.3	10.0	3.3
Other	3.0	..	10	7.3
Prior library experience	86.2	57.1	70.0	75.6

The majority of CSU students already had substantial library experience, with 97.6 per cent working either all or some of the time while studying, mostly in library or information-related work. Of these students, 67.4 per cent were working full time for at least part of the time they were studying. Table 7 indicates the range of employment those students were involved in during their study.

Table 7: Field of work while studying (percentage of graduates)

	Undergraduate	Graduate Diploma	Masters	All graduates
Librarianship	76.9	42.8	60.0	65.0
Other information related	7.7	17.9	13.3	11.4
Computing	4.6	10.7	10.0	7.3
Other	4.6	28.6	16.7	13.0
No response	6.2	3.3

For all students, it may be assumed that the course of study undertaken has enabled them to consolidate their choice of career with 65.0 per cent employed in librarianship while studying, rising to 74.8 per cent 18 months after graduation.

Relevance of degrees to subsequent professional employment

In their 1998–2002 survey, Genoni and Smith found that 92.4 per cent of respondents reported that their qualification was essential in, or helped with, gaining their current employment (2005:347). This compares with 83.6 per cent of the CSU graduates surveyed (see Table 8), many of whom commented favourably on the positive aspects of the course in gaining employment. Thus one graduate noted that ‘the course work studied at CSU is completely applicable to my current position as Branch Manager...’ with another noting ‘the subjects were very relevant to my employment’ and a third saying ‘I use these skills every day in my work’. However, these perceptions are not shared by every graduate, with one responding that ‘most of what I learnt on the course was theoretical and not applicable to my jobs’ and another saying ‘TAFE gave me much more practical skills which are much more useful in my work... in a small library’ indicating the difficulty of designing subjects which meet the needs and expectations of every student and employer and possibly, a misunderstanding of the role of a university course of education compared to that at the TAFE level.

In addition, for undergraduates, many reported that choice of their non-library academic major made a significant contribution to their success in their current position. As one person said ‘The IT strand (major) I took helped with my main role with electronic services and administration of a library management system’.

Table 8: Qualifications helped gain position (percentage of graduates)

	Professional (80 respondents)	Para-professional (24 respondents)	Other (12 respondents)	Total (116 respondents)
LIM degree essential	75	16.7	16.7	56.9
Not essential but helped	18.8	54.2	25	26.7
May have helped marginally	..	8.3	8.3	2.6
Was not relevant	6.3	20.8	50	13.8

Of those in professional positions, 93.8 per cent reported their degree as either essential or helping in gaining their position. This is to be expected, as the majority of these positions would call for some form of mandatory qualification. For the para-professional and other categories, the need for an LIM degree was less pronounced. Again, this is to be expected given that these positions rarely call for a fully professional qualification. It is interesting to note that many did report it as helping in gaining para-professional positions – possibly another form of ‘credential creep’.

In addition, 82.2 per cent of CSU respondents agreed that the skills learnt in their course were very useful or moderately useful in their current position. This suggests that the course content generally is meeting current professional needs and is relevant to graduates in their day-to-day work. In separate Course Experience Questionnaires, completed by CSU students each year, a considerable majority of undergraduate and graduate students of the LIS programs for 2005 agreed or strongly agreed that the course helped develop or sharpen the skills described in Table 9.

Table 9: Higher-level skills acquired during the course

	Undergraduate	Postgraduate
Problem solving	74	71
Analytical skills	79	88
Written communication	91	71
Planning	74	56

The current survey indicated that most students believed that the skills learnt through the course of study were generally relevant to their current positions. Over 87 per cent of those in professional positions and over 95 per cent in para-professional positions reported this knowledge as being moderately or very useful. Previous studies such as Kennan, Willard and Wilson (2006) have indicated the importance of behavioural attributes such as communication, team work and interpersonal skills in gaining positions in the library and information-related industries. The results shown in Tables 9 and 10 suggest these skills are being acquired or further developed during an LIS student’s course of study at CSU. This is further confirmed by a range of student comments –

- ‘the management component has shown itself to be of the most use...’
- ‘I learnt heaps which helped me add to my knowledge and provide better customer service’

- ‘management topics have become particularly relevant as I have progressed, for example learning about change management and how people react to change means I have the ability to ‘predict’ how people will behave and can plan accordingly when implementing change’

Not everyone agrees, of course, with one student finding ‘the coursework focused on management issues...fairly irrelevant’. Once again this emphasises the difficulty in meeting the needs and expectations of all students and employers.

Table 10: Skills learnt relevant to position

	Professional	Para-professional	Other
Very useful	63.7	45.8	33.3
Moderately useful	23.8	50.0	33.3
Occasionally useful	12.5	0	16.7
Not useful	0	4.2	16.7

Further study

Students were asked whether they were undertaking further study since completion of their LIS degree. A surprisingly high number of students (23 per cent) reported they were undertaking further study across a wide range of disciplines and at varying levels ranging from TAFE certificate to doctoral. Less than 25 per cent of those undertaking further study were doing so in library and information management, with a similar number undertaking studies in education.

Conclusion

For any course, keeping the balance between the need to be relevant to the profession (and retain accreditation), maintaining necessary academic standards and ensuring students find the course relevant and fulfilling is not an easy task. Given the rapid change in our profession over the last two decades, and its continuing evolution, ensuring course work remains relevant is an ongoing and challenging role for the university. Course accreditation by professional bodies provides one means of assessing the relevance and appropriateness of a particular course, another is feedback gained from recent graduates. Targeted surveys such as this, which look closely at the usefulness and impact of the course on graduates’ work lives, make an important contribution to course development and our understanding of how the profession is developing.

The results, we believe, are encouraging for both CSU and the profession. The strong majority who report positively on the role of their course in acquiring relevant work skills to enable them to find a position and do well in it is encouraging, suggesting that generally, course content, design and delivery had met their needs. However, the need to maintain this relevance is the key to the long- term survival of the CSU course and is something of which the staff of the School of Information Studies is keenly aware. One interesting finding from this survey was the strong showing of ‘library’ positions as still, by a large degree, the main source of employment for CSU graduates. The rhetoric often delivered by LIS educators about fitting our graduates for the broad range of information and allied professions seems contradicted by the limited attraction of students to these fields or perhaps of employers in these areas looking at LIS graduates. Further research here would be useful.

While the figures reported in this study give cause for general optimism about employment prospects, the relevance of the course to students (and by extrapolation, to the profession), and perhaps an increasing number of younger people being attracted to the profession, it is also true that other sources, including anecdotal evidence, paint a less positive picture – for instance, the blog on Librarian Careers Information: Resources for Prospective Librarians (Australia) (Bhatt 2006).

Ongoing research, into graduate destinations and employer requirements, as well as investigations into wider perceptions of libraries, their role and staffing numbers and composition (particularly in the academic environment) is essential for the profession and its educators.

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Readers should note that while the Charles Sturt programs are currently titled Library and Information Management, and this name has been used throughout, the graduating students covered by this study were from the courses known as Library and Information Management (postgrad), and Library and Information Science (undergrad).

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State Librarians I have known since 1826

David J Jones

The author reviews, in a discursive and occasionally whimsical fashion, the lives and personae of those who have occupied the post of 'principal librarian' in NSW since Peter Cooke (1827). This article was originally given as an address to volunteers at the State Library of New South Wales.

HOW CAN I POSSIBLY TALK ABOUT STATE LIBRARIANS I HAVE KNOWN SINCE 1826? For the more pedantic, of course, there have only been state librarians under that name since the mid-1970s. Earlier heads of the library were 'principal librarians' back as far as 1869, and of course I don't go back quite that far. Before 1869, well, the word 'librarian' may well be hyperbole, as you will see. But in one way or another I have come to know quite a bit about many of the heads of the institution, by personal contact, by reputation or rumour, or through their own writings or those of others. I only ever met five in the flesh – Metcalfe, Richardson, Doust, Crook and Schmidmaier – and some of them only briefly. I've read about all of them. And I've researched and written about Metcalfe, Ifould and Anderson, plus vignettes of Bladen and Walker. That gets me back to 1869, and before then is not a yawning abyss but some names and some reputations chronicled, as honestly as he could, by one of their successors. You will see the names of all of these 'state librarians' on the glass plaque next to the marble stairs in the Mitchell Wing. It's something of a shock when you realise that along with worthy librarians and recipients of honours from the profession or from His or Her Majesty as the case may be, are a number of rogues, ne'er-do-wells and, not to put too fine a point on it, drunkards and failures. None of the latter, I hasten to add, is still alive to sue me.

The incumbents

Peter Cooke

When the Australian Subscription Library opened with its thousand volumes on 1 December 1827 it occupied the first floor of a building in Pitt Street, Sydney. On the ground floor was the Committee for the management of the Sydney Dispensary (now Sydney Hospital). Peter Cooke was librarian and dispenser – for £40 a year – and lived on the top floor. As I rather unkindly put it, he dispensed medicines for the sick, books for members of the Library and alcohol for himself. Whatever training he had received, it certainly wasn't in librarianship or winning friends and influencing people. After having to be roused from the drunken stupor in which he had lain

for more than a day, he was sacked. Having written that – based I seem to recall on Richardson's *The colony's quest for a national library* and Committee minute books, I began to wonder what happened to Mr Cooke when he faced the sober light of day, and indeed how he had come to be there in the first place. A clue was the occupation of 'dispenser', which even in the earliest days of New South Wales would have required some kind of education and training. The internet is a wonderful thing, and when googled, Peter Cooke threw up some intriguing possibilities (especially when not connected with Dudley Moore). The most promising, as is often the case when you are looking for information on deceased individuals, was a note by a family historian who had reached an impasse. This lady, named Cooke, had been researching an ancestral Peter Cooke, former apprentice apothecary.

'Peter Cooke also known as Cooney,' she wrote. 'He arrived on the Tottenham [convict transport] in 1817. He was sentenced to life [at] Gloucestershire assizes. He was an apprentice apothecary in London at the time. He was sentenced at the same time as his father James Cooke/Cooney, who died on the voyage to Australia. Peter had two sons in Australia named Peter and James, [their] mother was Sarah Brackenrig, who came free to Australia.'

Well, Cooke, even with an 'E' is not that unusual a name, but there are mercifully few Cookes in the online indexes of State Records New South Wales. This possible candidate for the State Librarianship had a bit of a history. The entry was headed COOKE, Peter or COOKEALS or COONEY. Per 'Tottenham', 1818.

'Cookeals', by the way, I'm sure never existed – I think someone has simply written Cooke als, or alias, and the next person has not noticed the space between. Then there are the following entries, which may or may not all relate to the same person:

1818 Oct 20 On list of convicts disembarked from the 'Tottenham' and forwarded to Windsor for distribution

1819 Aug 4 Assistant to Dr West. Evidence at inquest on Thomas Flannigan

1820 Dec 29 On list of persons requesting permission to marry

1822 Mar 25 Assistant to the hospital at Windsor. Deposition of re charges of embezzlement of Windsor Stores by John Treble

1822 Apr 2 Apothecary. Petition for mitigation of sentence

1824 Jan 19 Hospital Assistant to Dr West. Re the admittance to the hospital of Daniel Driscoll

1825 May 10 Petition to have his mother and son sent out to the Colony at Government expense; as Cookeals Cooney

If this is our man, within the next couple of years he had secured a position in the metropolis, presumably with Sarah and possibly some littlies in rooms above the library/dispensary and a bright future beckoned. But as we know, this was not to be. But there I must leave our first 'State Librarian' – this biographical sketch is the beginning of a work in progress and who knows what else will turn up?

Charles Henderson

Cooke's successor Henderson had been clerk to the Corporation of Church and School Estates and became 'librarian' in February 1829. We know little else about him – he only lasted a couple of months.

George Baxter

Baxter succeeded Henderson and we know a little of him, as he too was an ex-convict, and was said to be 'well qualified to fill the position'. As may be gathered, the Library Committee – all important men of Sydney – did the organising and issued the instructions. As the committee included the Superintendent of Convicts one imagines that Baxter had to mind his p's and q's. Still, he lasted a couple of years.

Thomas Connolly

Connolly became librarian in January 1832. In his time, the first attempt was made to classify the collection in 24 categories, from agriculture and horticulture to voyages and travels. There were printed catalogues at the time – one has Scott's novels listed under 'Sir'. By 1836 there were 2600 volumes. Connolly was in office for seven years. When he resigned, the position was advertised in the Sydney papers.

John Fairfax

John Fairfax obviously read the classifieds, and was appointed on 1 April 1839. He made an immediate impression. The committee gave him a bonus for his work on the catalogue and promised him an increase in salary if he would stay at the Library, but Fairfax was on his way to bigger things and after two years he resigned. A pity, really – I think the Fairfaxes would have made quite good librarians. And they have certainly been generous to the State Library over the years.

Phillip J Elliott

Phillip Elliott started work in March 1841, at a time when the library was about to get a new building of its own, on the corner of Bent and Macquarie Streets. Elliott's name was among those on a brass plate embedded in the foundation stone. The new building opened in 1845 but for the next two decades the library was 'in an almost constant state of poverty'. Elliott was still going strong in 1851, asking for (but not getting) a pay rise. In the following year, however, his pay rose from £155 to £205. There was also a library assistant employed at this time. The Library was actually hopelessly in debt, but Elliott – who must have been an optimist – had the bright idea of paying the committee a rental in order to run the library as a private business. This scheme lasted all of a year and in December 1865 the arrangement with Elliott ended and he left.

D R Hawley

Hawley took over in December 1865. The Titanic had a new mate. Around this time income was less than £500 a year, the debt was around five thousand pounds and it cost over a thousand a year to run the library. You didn't have to be a Micawber to realise how precarious things were. By 1869 the committee was at its wits' end, the building was put up for auction – without attracting any satisfactory bids – and the whole library and its building were finally bought by the NSW government at the bargain price of £1500 for the books and £2600 for the building – a shrewd investment. Hawley's librarianship was over, but he stayed on as an assistant.

Robert Cooper Walker

On 30 September 1869 the Library was officially reopened by the Governor, Lord Belmore, under the title 'Free Public Library, Sydney,' the Colony's first truly public library. On the following day the new Librarian, Robert Cooper Walker, an experienced public servant, took up his duties, with two assistants, one of them Hawley. Walker, then about 36 years old, had earlier worked as an accountant for the Government Railways and as inspector of charities. One of his first jobs at the Library, apart from culling fiction and adding to the collection, was to reorganise the 20 000 volumes into 12 classes. A title list was printed in 1869, and an improved catalogue in 1872. In 1876 Walker started on something more ambitious: an author, title and rough subject index of the collection – it took two years and covered 990 pages. Walker was assisted, rather than hindered, by the Trustees, several of whom devoted time to the Library.

Public reaction to the new Library was enthusiastic: 60 000 people signed the visitors' book in its first year. The Library grew in extent and influence. A lending branch opened in 1877. A travelling library scheme, consisting of boxes of books for loan to country areas, began in 1883. The building underwent repairs and a major extension. Walker himself compiled a huge bibliography of works relating to Australia and New Zealand (*Australasian bibliography*, Sydney: Government Printer, 1893). The Library's collection grew from 16 000 volumes in 1869 to over 100 000 in 1893, when Walker retired. A highlight of Walker's years was the donation of a First Folio of Shakespeare in 1883. He was 'a man of great industry, conscientiousness, and enthusiasm, entirely devoted to the Library, and possessed of a kindness and urbanity which endeared him to his officers and helped to popularise the Institution with its clients'.

Henry Charles Lennox Anderson

Walker was succeeded by the academically brilliant Henry Charles Lennox Anderson. As his initials were HCL some wag nicknamed him 'hydrochloric'. Anderson had been director of the Department of Agriculture since 1890, but during an economic depression the Department was disestablished, and Anderson was transferred to the Free Public Library, with a lower salary. It was a career for which he had no training, but Anderson was undaunted. It did not take him long to see the weaknesses, as well as the strengths, of the Library. Despite recent extensions, the building was still cramped. Publication of the printed catalogue was running behind schedule. Deposit of publications under the New South Wales Copyright Act had dwindled. There had been no stocktake for eight years. Many of the staff were in a comfortable rut, but Anderson soon 'made the dunderheads wake up and gave them to understand that if they did not work they would have to find other positions.'

Anderson's achievements in his 13 years were considerable. The annual stocktake resumed. Country students were supplied with parcels of books, and new items were added to boxes of books lent to country locations. Anderson saw his Library as serving the whole state, not just Sydney. Classes in literature and library practice were held for staff, who were told to attend in their own time. Steps were taken to reduce thefts from the Library. Discipline was tightened. The printed catalogue was brought up to date, and cataloguing practice was codified and standardised in a guide which Anderson compiled and published. The printed catalogue gave way in due course to a card catalogue, and the Dewey Decimal Classification was introduced in 1901.

In 1899 an unforeseen occurrence at the examinations for appointment to the Library staff was to leave an indelible mark on the face of the Library. A candidate, identified as NB Kibble, applied to sit the examination. On the day of the examination it was realised that this candidate was a woman. Nita Bernice Kibble scored the highest mark, and after some consideration, an offer of appointment was made. She took her place on the Library staff, the first of a long line of dedicated, well-educated women. Not only was she a trailblazer for able women, but she would occupy key positions in the Library for almost the next half century. Anderson pointed to the practical advantages of women staff, in terms of ability and their willingness to accept lower salaries. Nita Kibble was soon joined by Misses Windeyer, Rutherford and Fitzhardinge, who headed the order of merit in examinations to fill vacancies in 1901. Within ten years most of the middle-ranking positions were occupied by women.

Anderson became an undisputed leader of his profession, reluctant though he had been to join it. He was one of those invited to report to the Commonwealth on the formation of a federal library, perhaps with himself in mind as a future National Librarian. He had visited libraries overseas, had met and corresponded with influential international figures in librarianship, including Andrew Carnegie and Melvil Dewey. Anderson had his critics. Disgruntled staff and an antagonistic bookseller combined to accuse Anderson of misconduct, culminating in a Parliamentary enquiry, from which, however, Anderson emerged untarnished.

What Anderson regarded as his crowning achievement was the securing of the Mitchell bequest. In 1898 David Scott Mitchell, whom Anderson had been cultivating assiduously for some time, informed the Trustees that he was prepared to bequeath his collection to the Library, together with a generous endowment. His conditions included incorporation of the Trustees, maintaining the integrity of the collection and providing a suitable building for it. The government was slow to respond, but in 1906 work began on the Mitchell Wing, so that by 1907, when Mitchell died, there was substantial compliance with the conditions of his will.

In 1905 Anderson was offered the position of Director of the Intelligence Department, a new state government body responsible for assisted immigration, collecting and disseminating information about the state, compiling statistics, promoting closer settlement, developing tourism and organising New South Wales pavilions at international exhibitions. He remained Principal Librarian, but some of his duties were delegated to Frank Bladen, Librarian of the Lending Branch. At the end of 1906, Anderson's workload at the new department increased, and he retired from the Library. He later renewed his links with the Library, being appointed a trustee in 1922. He died in March 1924.

One of his successors wrote that Anderson had 'succeeded in building up, with a very inefficient staff and a miscellaneous collection of books, a well-organised and valuable library... Few will ever realise the difficulty of his task and the very great ability and knowledge which he brought to bear on it.' Anderson's name is commemorated in the HCL Anderson Award, the highest professional award of the Australian Library and Information Association. Its first recipient was John Metcalfe.

Frank Murcott Bladen

Frank Murcott Bladen, barrister by training, historian by inclination and librarian by default, became the new Principal Librarian in 1906. Born in Staffordshire, he had come to Australia as a child and had a university education. He joined the New South Wales public service in 1875 and was employed at Sydney Observatory, the Government Printing Office, and from 1897 at the Public Library. He had a flair for writing, and had edited volume two of *History of New South Wales from the Records* and all of *Historical Records of New South Wales*. He was very active in the Royal Australian Historical Society. As head of the busy but otherwise undemanding Lending Branch, however, he had not been overtaxed. (In 1909 the Sydney Municipal Council assumed responsibility for the Lending Branch, and Charles Bertie got to work, having it cleaned thoroughly, buying new books and generally putting it in order).

There were some innovations during Bladen's time: monthly exhibitions of Library 'treasures' and loans to lighthouse keepers and branches of the Teachers' Association. He established a bindery and opened a special room for university students during the vacation. In 1910 the Mitchell Library opened, with Hugh Wright as the first Mitchell Librarian. Bladen penned a commemorative booklet.

In November 1910 Dr James Frederick Watson was appointed to the Board of Trustees. A medical practitioner with an interest in Australian history, he soon made his mark. When 'certain complaints concerning the management of the Library' were relayed to the Board, he moved to establish an investigating committee. Bladen's performance had deteriorated noticeably and the Trustees no longer trusted him. He was not allowed to select books himself but had to be overseen by a new committee of Trustees. His drinking – a common weakness among staff in several Australian libraries at the time – was getting the better of him, and his health was declining. He had spent half of 1909 on sick leave.

The investigating committee was very critical. They found irregularities in the appointment of temporary staff and were unhappy with the quality of staff being selected. Leave records were deficient. Outside work was being undertaken in office hours. Correspondence was not being dealt with promptly: no registers were kept and letters disappeared. Staff training was inadequate and duties were ill-defined. Bladen's punctuality and efficiency did not improve and the Trustees suspended him, making Watson Honorary Acting Principal Librarian and Secretary pending a permanent appointment. Although they were unaware of it at the time, they were exceeding their powers: such appointments needed Executive Council approval.

Watson warmed to his task, taking on additional cleaners, rearranging shelving and collections, enforcing discipline, signing off the attendance book each morning at 9:15, forbidding staff to take 'early marks' on Saturdays, prohibiting the use of matches within the Library and instructing staff to dust newspaper volumes before issuing them. Temporary staff carried out 'changes and renovations' under Watson's direction. Additional shelving, over which Bladen had dithered, was erected. Watson sought advice from the British Museum and the Public Record Office in London on the best ways of classifying manuscripts. Bladen was eventually certified permanently unfit, was retired as from 31 January 1912 and died not long afterwards. When the vacancy was finally advertised there were 22 applicants, and, because of a compromise

with the Minister, who wanted a serving public servant appointed (not one of the Trustees), the new principal librarian was to be a young man of 35 from Adelaide: WH Ifould, principal librarian of the Public Library of South Australia.

William Herbert Ifould, 'Billy Ifould', 'The Chief'

I feel that, of all the State Librarians, I know Billy Ifould best, although I never met him and have never even heard his voice. Although he lived to a great age, he died a year before I set foot in Australia (and indeed set foot in the Library). Ifould was the subject of my doctoral thesis, and it is a truism that in any kind of work like that, one falls, as it were, in and out of love with one's subject. There were times when Ifould exasperated me – he left no diaries, no recordings (he refused to talk to Hazel de Berg on tape in the National Library's oral history program) – he wrote no reminiscences, didn't contribute to the professional literature once he had retired, and systematically tidied up on a regular basis.

So how did I come to know him in the five or so years I studied 'WH Ifould and the development of libraries in New South Wales, 1912–1942'? Well, I read every surviving State Library file from about 1910 to 1943, every copy of an out-letter, every in-letter, all of the minutes of the Trustees, all of the annual reports, all of Ifould's manuscripts – not a lot of personal stuff, but lots of speeches typed, double spaced, on half-quarto sheets, he was an accomplished speaker – the odd radio interview transcript (no, the ABC didn't still have him on record), his own monograph – on sweet pea culture – and some of the gardening articles he wrote for the *Evening News*. Plus his conference papers, the report of the government enquiry which he chaired, and so on. I talked with one of his daughters-in-law – two of his sons died in the war and the third, Lister Ifould, who became a senior executive of CSR, had also died before I became interested in his father.

I spoke with the dwindling number of his former colleagues – the late Wilma Radford, for example, who worked with Ifould for around ten years. The late Tom McKay, amateur golfing champion and MLC, who had written reminiscences, including some of Ifould, which he lent me. The late Andrew Osborn, the feisty former librarian of the University of Sydney and Harvard, who worked at the Parliamentary Library in Canberra when Ifould was in his prime. The late Sir Harold White, former National Librarian. Gordon Richardson, a later State Librarian, now living in Scotland. Gough Whitlam, who had lived across the road from the Ifoulds in his youth. The late Enoch Powell – who had been on the Board of Trustees of the Library during Ifould's time. Jo McIntyre, who as a junior member of staff remembered Mr Ifould's nintieth birthday afternoon tea in the Board Room – they thought he was late, but then they heard someone running up the back stairs – and there he was.

I read books about Rotary: Ifould was a founder member of the Rotary Club of Sydney. Books about Elanora Country Club – he was an early member and shareholder there too. The Australian Club. Books about fishing in the Snowies in the early years of the last century: Ifould spent New Year there when he could, staying at The Creel. Hudson Fysh's book on fishing, for example, provided a list of large trout caught in the Snowy rivers round that time, from which I could work out where Ifould was – he bagged some big 'uns – and with whom he was fishing. Then I looked at the photographic evidence. If Ifould didn't leave me a written note telling me that

he had been honoured with a dinner at a fancy restaurant in Adelaide when he left there in 1912, at least I could work it out for myself in the photographs. I could verify his enthusiasm about acting, seeing him in doublet and hose, made up and gazing at the skull of Poor Yorick. I could look at his head – the bronze head in the Vestibule. And I could also work out how tall he was, not from the bronze head, but by measurement, using a photograph of him standing next to one of the Aboriginal bronze doors in 1943 and taking account of the size of the hat he was wearing at the time. I knew from photographs that he smoked a pipe. I knew that his wife drove, but that he didn't. I knew he caught the train from Warrawee to work – with a ferry ride on the way before 1932 – and the occasional lift from a cabinet minister who lived down the road. I knew from file notes that he enjoyed a drink, but not, I am sure, to the extent of his predecessor. I won't go on. You've all been in and around libraries long enough to be able to teach me a trick or two about research, and you certainly know what turns up once you start digging. In the days of the internet, of course, there is even more there to be found – including a lake and a hill on Macquarie Island named after him.

Ifould started work here – or rather in the old Public Library building where the Renzo Piano building now stands – in August 1912, and had an immediate impact. He gained the confidence of the Trustees and the Minister. The Library was able to raise its head once again. Services developed, collections improved, methods were modernised, discipline was restored, and all the staff were encouraged to work hard and to gain satisfaction from being of service to the public. The philosophy of service endured and had a remarkable effect upon people who worked here for the next three decades and beyond.

Those whom he recruited – with a few exceptions – were outstanding, particularly the women. He had inherited some brilliant staff, Ida Leeson, Nita Kibble, Zoe Bertles, for example, but those who joined his staff and stayed for any length of time began to share his passion for service. One has only to think of Jean Arnot and Wilma Radford, both of whom would, in other times, have been State Librarians. But it was a female-dominated profession headed by men, and from the earliest times of his tenure, Ifould was desperately seeking a male deputy who would succeed him.

In the 1920s he recruited a number of likely men. One, Otho Pentelow – his initials were STOP – came from his old library. Another came from Melbourne, but was a bit of a flop. Another had worked at Fisher Library, and after some faltering and indecision in the 1920s, his star would rise and rise and rise – that man's name was John Metcalfe. I've written a little on Metcalfe's ascent and on the side-lining of Ida Leeson, as well as the secret resolution of the Trustees back as far as 1919 never to recommend the appointment of a woman as State Librarian. They are long, but important stories, but too long for this context. And I look forward to Sylvia Martin's work on Ida Leeson with great interest.

Ifould's years spanned the first World War, the roaring twenties, the Depression, the growing awareness of the need for public libraries in the 1930s, the Munn-Pitt Report, the Free Library Movement, the Libraries Advisory Committee, the Australian Institute of Librarians (of which Ifould was the first President), the Library School, the 1939 Library Act – and then the anticlimax, the outbreak of World War II and

the suspension of public library development until 1944. And of course, there was Ifould's *piece de resistance*, the commencement of work on the main portion of the library building – the Vestibule, Reading Room, ground and first floor offices of what we now call the Mitchell Wing. It was commenced before the war and completed during the war, and there is a little bit of Ifould in every part of its design and decoration, from his contacts in the media and printing unions who provided stained glass windows in the Vestibule, to the Chaucer Windows and Bronze Doors donated by his old golf buddy, William Dixon.

Ifould turned 65 in 1942, but he was still full of beans. He was made Deputy Director of the Commonwealth Department of War Organization of Industry to help out with the war effort. Here was a 'mere librarian' helping to rationalise milk and bread runs to save petrol, and introduce austerity clothing – no turn-ups or lapels, for example, to save cloth, and countless other initiatives to save scarce resources and to find substitutes for imports. His three sons were in the services – only one would survive the war – and Ifould wrote of the anxious times he and his wife were having. He didn't hover round the library after he retired. He declined to be a member of the Board of Trustees or a member of the Library Board. Metcalfe, who succeeded him, wouldn't have needed him anyway – Ifould had trained him well. Ifould continued his fishing – I can picture him in his eighties, in waders, casting his Ifould's special fly – and maintained his other outside interests (golf, gardening, Rotary), staying very alert right to the end.

I think I know the reason why he was running a little later than he would have liked when Gordon Richardson invited him to afternoon tea on his ninetieth birthday. He had been distracted in the reading room by a little duplicated booklet on the State Library's bindings, which included a reference to the experiments he had arranged years before using different types of tanning media in order to improve the longevity of bindings. He had asked if a copy of the booklet could be posted to him and the person on the desk, who, I imagine, probably didn't know him from a bar of soap, helpfully complied, but asked him to write his name and address down on the envelope, which he did. Fortunately the booklet and the envelope survived the mails and Billy's tidying up, and gave me yet another a little insight into the man I would have loved to have met, or even to have heard – just once.

John Wallace Metcalfe

In the early 1970s my first job at the library was as an attendant in what was then the General Reference Library. This meant fetching items from stack and then re-shelving them. Parts of the stack were very quiet – so quiet, in fact, that one of the cleaners habitually hid in a chair in a dark corner of Upper Stack and had forty winks. On odd occasions you would encounter a member of the public down there – someone who had gone into automatic pilot coming down the stairs from the galleries and just kept going into the stack below. Our instructions were to challenge anyone we did not recognise – there were no uniforms or identity badges in those days.

Late one afternoon I was in part of what we then called 'New Wing' – the southeast wing, completed in the 1960s – when I saw this scruffy-looking old gent looking at some books in one of the compactus areas. Something about him made me hesitate to challenge him – added to the fact that I realised he was looking at S and DS 020s – and

instead I went back to the Front Desk and told the officer in charge – it may have been Denis Moore, or Jo McIntyre or Margaret Horton – that there was a stranger in our midst. ‘Ah, don’t worry,’ they said, ‘that’s Mr Metcalfe, the former State Librarian. He’ll be looking up some old books on librarianship.’ And indeed he was.

I found out just how many books he was looking up a little while later, when I was Loans Officer – in charge of all of the interlibrary loans from GRL (there were very few in those days) and staff loans (which far exceeded interlibrary loans). Chasing up overdue, I found that Mr Metcalfe had in his possession a number of books on cataloguing and classification which he had borrowed years before, and he was regularly adding to his collection. Should I ring him – oh, yes, said Diana Drake, he can’t have them for ever, and someone else might need them (a good excuse to hasten a return, but in this case far from the truth). So I rang him – of course he was happy to bring them back – he thought he had finished with them anyway – and a few days later his battered car nosed its way into the car park behind the senior archivist-cum-car park attendant’s office and Metcalfe arrived with a large suitcase full of books, pleasant, chatty, a little ruffled, rather like the stereotypical academic, sure of himself – he knew his way around. I knew he was still writing in the professional journals and still having a go at the British classificationists, Bliss Classification, the British National Bibliography and his nemesis Ranganathan and colon classification.

Fifty years before that brush with fame, in the 1920s, when Metcalfe had been a new chum at the Library under Mr Ifould, he had not even been sure he would stay a librarian. He had only begun to work in a library because his mum saw a job going at Fisher Library and told him to apply. Metcalfe was attracted by the prospect of a change of scene. He was attracted too by the higher salary, although this was not a major motivation – and in this there was an affinity with Ifould – for Metcalfe ‘the mere fact of the supply of books was sufficient.’

Educated at Fort Street Boys’ High School, Metcalfe had passed the Public Service entrance examination in 1916, and was for a while a junior clerk in the State Taxation Department. He got the job at Fisher Library – Junior Library Assistant – and impressed Brereton, the University Librarian, who recognised his ‘eagerness to extend his field of knowledge and his energy in seizing every opportunity to improve his mental resources.’ He began a part-time degree in 1919, completing it in 1923. His referees included four professors. Two of the professors were Trustees of the Public Library, so he came highly recommended. He had all the right qualifications: a degree, knowledge of French, German and Dewey, and experience with a dictionary catalogue. And he was the right age. Two of the fifteen other applicants were over the age limit of thirty-five which Ifould had stipulated. The selection committee’s summary sheet listed their ages, marital status, and showed if they were ‘RS’ – returned soldiers. Metcalfe got the job because, Ifould explained, ‘although not a returned soldier, [he] was only 16 [actually 17] years of age when the War closed,’ but had six years experience at Fisher Library. Metcalfe was one of only two male library assistants. They assisted readers, ‘cajoled drunks, tried to throw them out, inspected the lavatories at night to see that there was nobody hiding in them... locked the front doors and did the bag-taking.’

At first Ifould may have had his doubts about Metcalfe. He was actually scruffy. He was 'introspective, very well able to talk amongst boon companions but not able to address a meeting.' In such circumstances he was awkward, shuffled his feet, studied his boots, looked up at the sky – anything but look at the audience. He was well-read and highly intelligent, but he presented poorly. In his twenties he was unsure of himself and uncertain what career he should follow. He was aware of his own abilities, but not of their focus. He enjoyed tennis, and was part of the Sydney bohemian set during the 1920s. Richard Pennington recalled a party at Metcalfe's in 1927, when Metcalfe lived in Darlinghurst: 'I found myself a little lost among artists and attractive women ("Models, but not necessarily of virtue," said Rundle; but I think he was exaggerating).' The conversations of writers, artists and their subjects, journalists, publishers, the more Bohemian doctors and barristers and the well-read librarian mingled merrily and noisily into the small hours of the morning. This was a far cry from Ifould's Rotary lunches, bridge evenings, weekends in the garden and on the golf course, the holidays fishing and tending his orangery. Metcalfe had an insatiable appetite for reading, perpetual inquisitiveness and a spirit of investigation throughout his lifetime. He picked up, turned over and then set aside a multiplicity of issues and causes, including Basic English, Mass Observation, Bliss symbolics, censorship and comics.

He settled down in the late twenties and became absorbed by librarianship, its theory and practice. He married, and his time-keeping improved. He was sent for elocution lessons and smartened himself up, encouraged by Ifould. I've written about this, and about the Mitchell Librarianship of 1932, when a new position was created for Metcalfe in order to ensure he was senior to Ida Leeson and was Ifould's heir apparent. He was sent on an overseas study tour to the United States, Britain and Europe, and wrote of his experiences. He became heavily involved with the Free Library Movement, with the Libraries Advisory Committee, with the drafting of the *Library Act 1939*, lecturing at the Library School and was prominent on the national stage as well, as a leading light in the foundation of the Australian Institute of Librarians. He worked on its constitution, devised most of its scheme of professional certification and examinations and became the dominant figure in Australian librarianship for over twenty years. His influence can still be felt.

The war came, Ifould retired, after some delay Metcalfe was appointed to succeed him, and as the war turned in the Allies' favour, thoughts turned to the unfinished business of free public libraries and implementing the financial provisions of the Library Act. In promoting public libraries, Metcalfe and GC Remington, a member of the Library Board, were like evangelists, arriving in a country town, talking with newspaper editors, people of influence, councillors, council officers, and convincing them of the value of public libraries and of the support these libraries would receive in subsidies and other assistance from the state library and the Library Board. Public libraries sprang up like mushrooms across the state. The Library School was busier than ever with new opportunities for trained librarians. The Australian Institute of Librarians and its examinations – many of which Metcalfe set and marked – were booming too.

He was one of the Australian delegation to the second general conference of UNESCO in Mexico City in 1947, was foundation editor of the *Australian Library Journal*, served for many years as an office-bearer in the Library Association of Australia and in 1959 left the Library to become foundation Director of the School of Librarianship at the University of New South Wales, as well as University Librarian. This was the first university school of librarianship in Australia. He retired in 1966, being succeeded by Wilma Radford, who became the first professor of librarianship in Australia. Metcalfe's retirement was vigorous. He wrote reviews, journal articles, obituaries and several works on classification and subject indexing. He wrote letters to the editor of *Australian Library Journal*. He was at great pains to correct sloppy historical research and what he saw as misapprehensions about the roles of various organisations in the development of librarianship in Australia.

He attracted great loyalty from those with whom he worked closely, and admiration from those who followed the threads of his lectures or writing. He was undoubtedly brilliant, hard-working and insightful and the first practising Australian librarian to have a significant profile overseas. He might never have been a librarian if he had been offered the job he applied for in the fledgling Department of External Affairs in the 1920s, or if he had veered into law, like some other alumni of the Public Library of New South Wales (such as Frederick Jordan). I got to know him through his writings and his assessments of events and people and movements, and he was a very acute observer.

There was a certain degree of perhaps forgivable egotism, and a certain diminution of the role of his rivals, but he was more often right than wrong, and often right when many others were wrong. He had respect for Ifould, rather than admiration. There must have been some gratitude there as well. He was rightly dismissive of Bladen, but had a lot of time for Anderson, and saw the great merits in Anderson's cataloguing guides which not only anticipated a number of overseas developments but also formed the basis of our cataloguing practice here until about 1980.

Metcalfe married, as I have mentioned, but he and Thelma were childless. In later life Metcalfe anonymously donated large sums of money to the State Library. He died a few years before Thelma, who in her will continued that generosity to the Library, helping to fund the Metcalfe Auditorium – which is in fact named after both of them – and scholarships to help develop to an even higher degree the quality of library services. We can get a little of the flavour of Metcalfe the public speaker and the lecturer from a number of tapes of his reminiscences and addresses, and of course the notable ABC TV program from the 1950s which has been going the rounds recently. He was quite a man who cast a long shadow, so long a shadow, in fact, that many contemporaries barely escaped from it, and were dwarfed in part by his sheer intellect, breadth of interests, energy and tenacity and the force of his personality.

Gordon Dalyell Richardson

Gordon Dalyell Richardson started work at the Library in 1934 at the age of 17, and apart from a year in the State Taxation Department – like Metcalfe, curiously enough – he spent virtually all of his working life in the Library. He was in the AIF during the War and was reported missing in action, but it was later confirmed that he was a prisoner of war in Changi. In 1946 he returned to the Library and started to put his career together again. He studied, gained an MA, became involved in the professional association, rose steadily through the ranks, undertook a Carnegie-sponsored study tour in 1954–55. In 1954 he was appointed Deputy Principal Librarian and Dixon Librarian and in 1959 succeeded Metcalfe. Two years later when the Archives Office was given a separate identity, Richardson became Principal Archivist, as well as Principal Librarian and Mitchell Librarian.

Richardson was very much of the ‘old school’ in his management style. He issued ‘general orders’ to staff and expected a high degree of efficiency from all concerned. He was not a complete autocrat, and did consult his senior staff on major issues. Some staff found him a little daunting – the military manner (complete with highly polished black shoes and short haircut) made him seem a little severe in the early years of flower power, but there is no doubt that he tried to keep the interests of his staff in mind. Conversations with junior staff were along brief ‘happy in the service?’ lines in the lift and he was the essence of correct form.

When he took over from Metcalfe in 1959, the Library was in pretty good shape. Its collection budget was healthy, the final wing of the building was under construction, the intense pressure of numbers of students was beginning to ease with the growth in university libraries, but otherwise, numbers of users of the Library were increasing, as were reference enquiries, literature researches and use of the Mitchell. The quality of reference work was high – it was a point of pride to try to answer everything from the Library’s own resources and it was a major concession to suggest that we could not provide an item or piece of information and to refer someone elsewhere.

It was however increasingly difficult to retain staff – there was limited promotion within the Library and many were gaining appointments in other libraries, especially university libraries. There were also space challenges – even when the southeast wing was completed in the early 1960s there was little space to spare. There was also the beginnings of a crisis of identity – what was the Library’s role, how did it fit in with all of the public libraries, then burgeoning, or with other State Libraries, the National Library and the university libraries?

As a very junior staff member I had very little to do with Mr Richardson – first names were sometimes used downwards, but never upwards and often not sideways. Such was the formality it was often some time before junior staff even knew a more senior staffer’s given name. It was unusual for a superior to smile sweetly and say, ‘Please call me Judith’. (In fact it was 1983 before Russell Doust said to me, whom he had just made Building Project Co-ordinator, ‘David, I think you ought to call me Russell.’)

My distinct memories are of a formal lecture by Richardson as part of the induction for new staff (which also involved formal examinations which we had to sit under some regulation or other of the Public Service Act) when he addressed us on the history of the institution and its functions, pocket watch (I think) arrayed on his lectern – and very impressive it was too. I can recall his popping into the work room to check something on the telex machine (which in 1970 was the latest technology apart from the electric typewriter on his secretary's desk and the 'Varityper' used for William Dixon Foundation publications), sitting quietly reading the printout and then leaving, without uttering a word to anyone in the room. Another encounter was in a lift, when I was fetching items from stack for someone in the Reading Room. Mr Richardson was in the lift and noticed what I was carrying – some issues of *LASIE*, as it so happened – and he said something like 'Don't tell me someone is actually reading that nonsense' in what I think was intended to be an ironic tone. I mumbled something and promptly forgot about the incident – until years later when Dagmar Schmidmaier asked me to edit *LASIE*, which I must confess I hadn't read for years – but that didn't deter me and I put in three and a bit years as editor in my spare time. What I knew later, of course, was that Richardson had been an early champion of automation in libraries and had gone in to bat for a computerised serials control system which in its time was one of the most ambitious in the world. These were days when the Public Service Board and the Treasury had very tight control over every aspect of state government computing and getting any computer project up and keeping it going was no mean feat.

Richardson retired in 1973. His farewell gift from the staff was, after due consultation, a McCulloch chainsaw and he and his wife Ruth retired to a country property at Blayney. The call of his Scottish ancestry was, however, too strong, and after a few years they sold up their Blayney property – including their chainsaw, which they probably felt would be an unnecessary luxury – and moved to Inverness, Scotland, where I understand he rapidly assimilated. Ruth, I'm sad to say, is no longer with us, but Gordon is, as far as I know, still hale and hearty. I had a nice letter from him a few years ago, prompted by an article I had written – in true GDR style it had been typed, was word perfect, included evidence of dialectical assimilation – some Scots words I had to look up in the OED – and had been initialled by the author at the foot of each page.

As you may have gathered, I initially took a rather harsh view of Gordon, whose management style I thought archaic and whose vision, or so it appeared to me, was of a passive, reactive library. The Library seemed to be in search of a mission. It was on the brink of a period of high inflation, tightening budgets, increased book and journal prices, but was still trying to be all things to all comers. It was co-operating with other libraries to a limited extent – there was still an Extension Library lending items to public libraries, but there were no loans to public libraries from the General Reference Library, family historians were given short shrift, there was little direct contact between the State Library and public libraries (there was still a separate Library Board of New South Wales), exhibitions were staid (and they stayed and stayed on in the galleries for years), there were structural anomalies in the organisation, fully qualified librarians were often not employed or paid as such, promotion by seniority still reigned supreme (except when it came to female candidates), and there was an

overcrowded building. On the credit side there was a generally talented and enthusiastic library staff, a marvellous collection to work with and a respectable, if rather low, public profile. Everybody knew where the library was, even when they called it the Mitchell. So when the great fire of 1970 took place, the *Daily Mirror* could have the headline 'Mitchell saved' and everyone knew what they meant.

Russell Fletcher Doust

Russell had been Deputy since December 1970, became Acting Principal Librarian when Richardson retired and was appointed as Principal Librarian on 13 September 1973.

Russell had probably sensed the winds of change long before he became Principal or even Deputy. An organ scholar at the University of Sydney he was bright, ambitious and able to delegate. The latter quality was misinterpreted by some of the long standing senior staff, one of whom said to me she did not think Mr Doust wanted to be a librarian any more. In a sense she was right – he wanted to manage and direct the Library, not be a librarian. He immediately borrowed a capable senior librarian from the Mitchell, Warren Horton, as an assistant to get things done and before long Warren was chairing an enquiry into the Library's role and needs (LERN). Not long afterwards Warren became his deputy.

Doust was determined that the Library would be more outgoing, more responsive, better able to assert itself and stake its claim on government funding. A number of things helped him. The amalgamation of the Library Board of NSW and the Council of the State Library symbolised a closer relationship with public libraries, which we have built on over the years. We could be the public library for everyone in the state through their local public library. Sounds simple, but it needed (and needs) a lot of work, co-operation and goodwill.

I think Russell wanted to be liked. He wanted consensus, not conflict. He was much more concerned than his predecessors had apparently been about conditions of work, salaries, superannuation – I can remember his making sure some form or other was signed off as early as possible for me to ensure that I did not miss out on counting a few months of service for superannuation purposes. He liked to use first names. He engaged in management by walking around. He changed his image in keeping with contemporary styles. Pink shirts and grey ties appeared when they were in fashion. A beard appeared (his predecessor had reputedly banned a librarian from serving at the Front Desk because he had a beard). Meetings became a little less formal. A public relations officer was appointed. More promotions were made on merit. He won a titanic struggle with the Public Service Board to preserve our Serials Automation Project. More attention was given to image and corporate identity. The library began to be used as a backdrop for advertisements (including a video clip for Duran Duran involving tigers and a lot of smoke). The State Reference Library began to lend more freely. The Library began to use online information services. Brighter, livelier and more popular exhibitions were mounted.

I guess Russell's most significant legacy is the Macquarie Street Wing, for which he and the Library Council lobbied tirelessly for years. Fortune favours the bold, is the Dixon motto, but in Russell's case circumstances favoured the persistent. He was fortunate to have in Neville Wran a Minister, and a Premier, for whom cultural activities were more than something tacked onto a sports or education portfolio.

The Premier's wife, Jill Hickson Wran, also took a personal interest – it's her name which is on the plaque commemorating the commencement of work on the Macquarie Street Wing. The then Deputy Premier and Minister for Public Works, Jack Ferguson, was also determined that the site next to Parliament House, long earmarked for the Library, would actually be a new wing for the State Library, not for additional Parliamentary facilities. The time was also right, with the Bicentenary just around the corner, and what more fitting celebration of that event than a new wing for the Library, with its unparalleled collection of Australiana – a much longer lasting legacy than 'bunting in the streets'.

The new building project gave Russell a new lease of life and he gave up any notions he had of early retirement. Warren, his deputy, got fed up waiting and became State Librarian in Victoria for a while before getting to the top of the pile, as it were, as Director General of the National Library. Russell's new deputy was a break with tradition, a breath of fresh air, a wind of change – all of that – and changes in management style and substance began to percolate through the organisation. Russell, like Ifould, retired before 'his' new building was complete, but changes in the institution were already happening, and would accelerate under his successors.

Alison Laura Crook

Alison Laura Crook (née Bunning) was like a wind of change when she arrived as Deputy State Librarian on 31 May 1982. She was the first Deputy State Librarian to be appointed from outside the State Library service and came with wide experience in academic libraries and as a university lecturer. It was a shrewd appointment. She was the first woman to be appointed Deputy State Librarian (the position had been occupied by men for 50 years). She was, incidentally, also the last Deputy State Librarian. Now she was the first woman to be appointed State Librarian. She brought new skills, a new outlook, and a new chic to the Executive. There was risk-taking, there were entrepreneurial activities, people were jogged out of their comfort zones, there was strategic planning, there were strategic partnerships. When she took over from Russell Doust in 1987, the pace of change quickened, and of course change has been the dominant theme ever since.

Dagmar Schmidmaier

Dagmar commenced duty in April 1995, retiring in April 2006.

Regina Sutton

Regina took up her appointment in July 2006.

Conclusion

We're now sailing in waters of more recent antiquity, shall I say, in which from the decks and from the crow's nests, or even on the bridge or in the bowels of the ship where people gaze at radar screens and global positioning systems, we able-bodied library historians are still too close to every horizon, artificial or otherwise, to have anything approaching a historical perspective.

It has been fun delving into the earlier years and into my less ancient years. It has been fun to place some of what I have seen or read about into a historical context, with all my own biases and prejudices. When I first saw the building – what we now call the Mitchell Wing – I was captivated. I loved the Reading Room, the imagery of culture and erudition, real and imagined. From the very first day I liked and admired most of the people I met inside the building, on both sides of the Front Desk. I was staggered by the collection. And I genuinely liked helping readers and, when I could, helping colleagues. And as I got to know a little more about the history of the place, it was the people, more than anything else, who fascinated me.

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Publishers are always interested in what the Journal's reviewers are saying: the process of intelligent reviewing is an essential element in the ongoing processes of writing and publishing. Check the reviews in this issue, and if you'd like to become a member of the ALJ reviewing team, contact Dr Gorman or the incoming Editor, Ian McCallum <ian.mccallum@alianet.alia.org.au>.

Editor

A kit for the fit

Allen, Mary Beth Sports, exercise and fitness: a guide to reference and information sources. reference sources in the social sciences. westport, ct: libraries unlimited, 2005. 287p us\$38.99 hard isbn 1563088193 (available from James Bennett Pty Ltd)

a cornucopia of
interesting resources

As a sports enthusiast but not professionally responsible for sports-related materials, I was looking forward to seeing what this book would provide, and found that it opened up a cornucopia of interesting resources, not just on traditional sports practices but also on tangential areas such as statistics, fads and injuries. It aims to be an authoritative guide to collection development and an aid to reference work in the sporting arena. Over 1000 sources are described and evaluated and are grouped into three categories: traditional reference sources, instructional sources and websites.

The traditional reference sources (encyclopaedias, bibliographies, history books) were selected for their quality and comprehensiveness. Instructional sources aim to provide further information on a sport, for example, techniques and rules, and the web-site category was included to provide continuing access to current information.

The author has limited herself to selecting English language works published between 1990 and May 2004, although older classic works are included if more recent alternatives are not available.

Allen acknowledges that the sources do have a North American bias, although important items from other countries are included. For example, *The ABC of Rugby League*, published by the ABC does make it into the listings, as does *The Oxford Companion to Australian Cricket*. However, the websites are very US-based: the entries tend to be for the American federation or association for that sport.

The first chapter comprises general resources organised by type (almanacs, bibliographies, encyclopaedias, guides, rule books, statistics) while the second covers the Olympic Games. Subsequent chapters are broken down by sport type: aquatic, precision, bat and ball, small ball, large ball and so on, finishing with chapters on fitness and wellbeing activities.

Each chapter is broken down into individual sports and then subdivided into the three source categories. This layout, along with the three indexes, (subject, author and title), makes it easy to locate a resource, or to browse around the contents. The short annotations are well written and to the point, yet conveying sufficient detail to develop an analytical understanding of the resource's coverage. Full bibliographic details are provided, including price (US\$) and ISBN.

Extra awareness is required from non-American audiences arising from the author's indigenous understanding of sporting nomenclature. Football means American football, padded shoulders and all. There is no mention of Australian Rules football or Gaelic football and the 'round ball' game is referred to as soccer. Similarly in the index, the entry for 'hockey' covers ice hockey alone. Field hockey is listed only under 'F'.

This guide is an extremely comprehensive and impressively researched book and would be a useful addition to a librarian's toolkit. Particularly helpful when reviewing a collection, it is also easy to use as a reference tool to dip into when required to locate material.

Marie-Laure Bouchet
NSW Department of Commerce

A guide for the perplexed

Duckett, Bob, Walker, Peter and Donnelly, Christina *Know it all, find it fast: an A-Z source guide for the enquiry desk*. 2nd ed. London: Facet Publishing, 2004. 369p £26.95 soft ISBN 185604534X (available from James Bennett Pty Ltd)

...reference work is not about knowing the answer; it is about knowing where the answer might be...

The first edition of *Know it all* won the Best General Reference Work award from *Reference Reviews*, and information desk staff in England have praised the wealth of practical information it contains. The second edition is updated, enlarged and augmented by a brief index. However, reservations have to be expressed regarding both its suitability for use further afield, and its surprising omissions. Relatively little of the content is appropriate for use in Australia – definitely a gap in the market.

The authors remind us that reference work is not about knowing the answer; it is about knowing where the answer might be. Their intended user is the inexperienced reference desk staff member (they assert baldly that a ‘majority of staff on enquiry desks do not have formal qualifications’), and the advice offered is couched in a friendly tone. They provide tips for particular sorts of enquiry – for example, with legal or medical enquiries, give information, but not advice; ‘phone-a-friend’ if you think a colleague or outside expert may know the answer; always check the currency and reliability of information.

Enquiry desk staff navigate a multiplicity of sources. While the authors do recommend a good many websites and databases which complement the standard reference books, they may still be erring on the side of caution. Certainly some of the book-based enquiries they envisage may be more satisfactorily answered from web-based materials, such as information on dates or anniversaries, national anthems, perpetual calendars. The reference books recommended in ‘Awards and Prizes’ are long-in-the-tooth too.

Yorkshire bias seems evident in the subjects covered: there is too much on textiles and beer (but nothing on wine or whisky!). You will look in vain for whole Dewey areas such as philosophy, general science, physics, biology, astronomy. Other subjects are too sketchily covered: two books and four websites doesn’t begin to cover sport. Despite these serious omissions, the range of topics covered is very broad, which is a reminder that before this book appeared the inexperienced reference desk person would have had a lot more to be uneasy about. There are a few minor typos, including ‘fee information’ when they mean ‘free information’ – another debate altogether.

John MacRitchie, Manly Library

For the free-range and the caged

Fowler, Susan G. *Information entrepreneurship: information services based on the information lifecycle*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2005. 116p US\$25.00 soft ISBN 0810852586

In recent years increasing importance has been placed on commercial fee-based information services for clients in libraries. This title is a useful introduction for librarians to assist them in managing information, improving customer service and developing a commercial approach to library services. Areas such as the information lifecycle, the skills needed by information professionals, malpractice in the library arena and the requirements for a professional code of ethics are discussed.

The author appears well-qualified to write about the field of information management, as she has worked as a librarian with experience in education and information consulting – she calls herself a freelance librarian or ‘cybrarian’.

The author describes how libraries locate and retrieve information, adding value to it by reframing it for individual clients’ needs (customisation) with accuracy, integrity and timeliness. Topics include a very quick overview of Myer Briggs Type Indicators (MBTI) with respect to learning and information-gathering styles, although the description of MBTI is somewhat lacking depth, and more detail would be required if a librarian were to apply the sample learning-style questionnaire as supplied.

Fowler outlines aspects of the information lifecycle with descriptions of the creation, use, storage, retrieval, archiving and discarding of information. She covers the ‘file it and forget it’ process commonly used in organisations and describes how to overcome this problem by the use of retention schedules and standardised information systems (where all users in a company use the same filing system). Using a fictitious company, she outlines the stages involved in determining information needs and how to map the knowledge of an organisation. Teamwork and preservation of corporate memory are covered briefly.

The question-and-answer format in some chapters (2 and 7) is rather unusual, and perhaps the information could have been presented more effectively. A concise volume, this book is easy to read and written in an informal style – the essence of the title can be absorbed within an hour or two. A very brief index is included, along with a short resources section containing a concise bibliography, in addition to a learning styles questionnaire and sample interview questions.

This book is aimed at the independent information professional working in the corporate environment, although many librarians providing reference services will find something of value in this publication. As a practising information consultant working in a corporate service environment, Fowler has some interesting insights; however, in reality few librarians are in a position to implement major changes in the knowledge management systems of their organisations. Nevertheless, this work gives an overview of the area that would be useful for a corporate librarian in a smaller organisation who may have greater input into the organisation’s management, as well as those people wishing to expand their role into that of knowledge manager.

...is aimed at the independent information professional working in the corporate environment...

I recommend this title to corporate librarians and special librarians, along with information professionals in public libraries and educational areas who are exploring value-added fee-based services and need some guidance. In addition, it is a good source for any librarian wishing to improve customer service by clarifying service goals, customising information for clients and planning an entrepreneurial approach to the information services.

Kay Neville, Sydney

Leaves some unanswered questions...

Genoni, Paul and Walton, Graham, eds *Continuing professional development – preparing for new roles in libraries: a voyage of discovery. Sixth World Conference on Continuing Professional Development and Workplace Learning for the Library and Information Professions. IFLA publications, 116. Munich: K.G. Saur, 2005. 308p US\$124.00 hard cover ISBN 3598218443*

The papers in this IFLA publication are presented in four sections: examining aspects of preparation for new and changing roles; engaging and supporting people in CPD; tools and programs for CPD and international perspectives on CPD. The book is prefaced by the text of the inaugural Elizabeth W Stone Lecture in which Blanche Woolls traces the contribution of Elizabeth Stone as founder of the Continuing Professional Education Round Table, reviews the current challenges and offers suggestions for future development of programs.

Eight papers make up the Preparation section, and these focus on the changing skills needed to cope with emerging technologies and find employment in a networked world. The role of professional associations is highlighted, particularly with relation to the delivery of online staff development in fields not normally taught in library courses such as marketing.

The Supporting People section contains a group of five papers which examine ways of understanding motivation, providing a supportive environment and minimising barriers and negative influences. The paper by Chris Erickson, 'How do they know what they don't know', raises some challenging points about knowledge management and digital preservation.

When considering tools for CPD, the eight papers selected deal with a diversity of programmes from post-master's and leadership education to basic competency-based training and certification. The evaluation of programs and measuring returns is seen as an important part of CPD.

Finally, the international perspectives include papers from New Zealand, South Africa, continental Europe, the United Kingdom and Ireland. These papers stress the advantages to be gained from international partnerships and suggest that programs developed in one country may be usefully adapted for use elsewhere, particularly through the use of increasingly universal technologies.

The role of professional associations is highlighted, particularly with relation to the delivery of online staff development

The conference left participants with a number of themes to consider, including the future of mentoring, maintaining quality in CPD, the need for ongoing research into the most effective programmes and, of course, the ever-present need for funding to deliver programmes. Overall, this publication offers a comprehensive coverage of a very interesting and relevant conference. However, its cost may discourage its purchase by any library not actively involved with the planning and implementation of CPD programmes for library and information workers, although library managers would find it useful in the long-term strategic planning of staff needs and staff development.

Helen Dunford, TAFE Tasmania

More data than detail?

Heath, Fred M; Kyrillidou, Martha; and Askew, Consuella A, eds *Libraries act on their LibQUAL+™ findings: from data to action*. Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press, 2004. 254p US\$29.95 soft ISBN 0789026023 (also published as *Journal of Library Administration* 40, 3/4)

LibQUAL+™ is a web-based survey instrument used to measure users' perceptions of library service quality. It was developed by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) in partnership with Texas A&M University. This volume contains 15 articles showcasing use of LibQUAL+™ in Spring 2002. The introductory article is followed by two on OhioLINK, five reporting applications of LibQUAL+™ in health sciences libraries and seven articles relating to university and college libraries.

This book will appeal to readers with significant interest in library customer perception surveys. While it is not a manual on LibQUAL+™, a quite clear picture of the instrument and findings can be gained. The subtitle is 'from data to action', yet I was disappointed at the dominance of data rather than examples of practical action to improve services. Seeking more data, particularly through focus groups, was commonly described. While additional research was clearly useful, I had anticipated more articles on positive outcomes for library users.

The introductory article summarises findings regarding the relationship between institutional characteristics, such as volumes held, and scores on the four survey dimensions of Affect of Service, Access to Collections, Information Control, and Library as Place. The article is challenging going for those without a statistical background.

It is only the second half of the book which pays significant attention to actions taken. These include using a structured methodology for analysing comments, benchmarking data with comparable institutions, highlighting significant gaps between service expectation and adequacy, focus groups to gain more information, tabulating item data by discipline showing which discipline areas are least satisfied, and using the data in strategic planning. The article which best discusses actions to improve service, rather than analysis of data, is by Amy Knapp on work at the University of Pittsburgh.

...well written and presents a wealth of information

Libraries act on their LibQUAL™ findings is well written and presents a wealth of information. You will gain most insight into the instrument itself, the extent and limitations of data it produces and common findings. While there are examples of service improvements, do not buy the book if this is your main interest.

Julia Leong, University of New England

Every which way

Hennen, Thomas J *Hennen's public library planner: a manual*. New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, 2004. 417p + CD-ROM US\$125.00 soft ISBN 1555704875

For any journey it is always best to have direction. For libraries and librarians that direction often comes in the form of a living document that speaks to where the organisation is today, where the planners intend to take it in the future, and how to get there. Here is a structured tool for your public library's planning process. With coverage of key issues – budgeting, governance and administration, electronic services, collection development, technology, access and facilities, staffing and personnel – a wide range of checklists assess the quality of everything from the library director to the integrated system and meeting facilities. Reference tables help evaluate your library's needs for FTE staffing, collection holdings, hours of operation, material expenditures, and more (even better, the CD-ROM calculates many of these numbers for your particular library). Policy development is covered with sample mission statements and policies for volunteers and friends, Internet use, disasters, and more, for large and small libraries alike. The step-by-step structure answers key questions on how to create a committee, how to create long-range directives, and how to communicate the results. The numbers games of statistics, data, surveys, and even percentile comparisons are tackled in a simple manner. The companion CD-ROM features more than 50 checklists and 'fill-in-the-blank' forms.

The four chapters of the book take the reader sequentially through the broad range of principles and data with the underlying philosophy that, while every library plan needs to be unique, no plan should be developed without comparison to other libraries and common principles and policies. The author stresses the need to build upon strong basics of solid budgeting and finances, good policy development, and attention to what others have done successfully. Of particular interest is Part 4 of the book: 'Hennen's Handbook of Support Material'. This includes the bibliography and real-world examples.

This is a well set-out book. The opening page of each chapter lists its contents clearly in a shaded box, and the second page similarly presents a list of figures. The bibliography includes a wide variety of works and is a serious resource in itself. The index is short but useful. It is an essential resource for charting and navigating the public library's future but should also be useful in the planning of many other libraries. It would also be valuable for library students because of its clear, informative and logical sequencing.

Deborah A Cronau, Brisbane

...an essential resource for charting and navigating the public library's future

Curious perspectives...

Hofer, Candidia *Libraries*. Introduction by Umberto Eco. London: Thames and Hudson, 2005. 271 pp. US\$125.00 hard cover ISBN 0500543143

Barreneche, Raul A *New museums*. London: Phaidon. 206 pp. US\$99.95 hard cover ISBN 0714844985

In one of these two glossy illustrated books libraries are represented (by Hofer) as static works of art, while in the other Barreneche sees museums as 'theme parks' competing for a slice of the public's leisure time and disposable income.

Libraries is a strange book. Well-known German photographer Candida Hofer has assembled 137 colour photographs of the interiors of European and, to a lesser extent, American libraries. Not a reader, however, is to be seen anywhere! The publisher's blurb notes that this absence of readers ensures a 'prevailing silence', which instils 'a metaphysical quality that gives voice to the objects'. These objects range from library reading rooms and shelves, both ornate and functional, to lockers and statues.

It is unclear what audience Hofer and the publisher are attempting to reach. Those who want to look at beautiful libraries will certainly find some stunning library interiors through photos of the Bodleian in Oxford, the Escorial outside Madrid, the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York and the Bibliotheque Sainte-Genieveve in Paris. Other photos will not necessarily appeal to the bibliophile, for example a stack of books on a table in the Austrian National Library. Some photos are slightly misleading, such as the now dated 1994 photos of the British Library taken on the old Bloomsbury site rather than the current building in St Pancras. Hofer's book is essentially one devoted to the photographic objet d'art rather than to living libraries.

This slightly unreal feel to *Libraries* is continued in Italian novelist and scholar Umberto Eco's Introduction. Eco's name on the cover is clearly meant to be a major selling point. This introduction, 'De Bibliotheca', is an English translation of a paper Eco gave in 1981 at a conference in Milan. Elements of this speech are very dated, particularly in Eco's comments about his then use of libraries in Toronto and Yale and problems encountered with photocopiers and microfiche readers. No attempt seems to have been made to update the text by either Hofer or the publisher. Eco, moreover, has more recent pieces on books, reading and libraries in the digital era, not least his speech at the opening of the new Bibliotheca Alexandrina in November 2003, available on the web at <<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2003/665/bo3.htm>>.

New museums stylishly documents 27 new museums in 13 countries in Europe, the United States, Israel and Japan. Neither the National Museum of Australia nor Te Papa in New Zealand feature, thus making this essentially a Northern Hemisphere production. The notable architects represented include Santiago Calatrava, Zaha Hadid, Kengo Kuma and Alvaro Siza. Sir Norman Foster's stunning renovation of the British Museum courtyard shows how old buildings can be infused with new life and light in 'museum makeovers'.

A New York-based critic and editor, Barreneche sees the 21st century as a 'golden age for the museum', particularly exemplified by museums such as the Guggenheim in Bilbao and the Getty in Los Angeles. Museums now judge their popularity from the

...libraries are represented by Hofer as static works of art, while Barreneche sees museums as 'theme parks'...

length of the queues outside, drawn by either their permanent collections or travelling exhibitions – ‘certifiable blockbusters as popular as hit movies and musicals’.

Umberto Eco once described two kinds of libraries: one designed to hide books and discourage readers, and another that makes discovery an adventure. The adventurous, high-tech, ‘discovery’ library buildings, such as the Seattle Public Library, have more in common with Barreneche’s innovative museums than the impressive yet ‘hidden’ Hoferian library images.

Colin Steele, Australian National University

Inspiring

Howard, Donald E *The role of reading in nine famous lives*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2005. 208p US\$35.00 soft cover ISBN 0786421339

While primarily a book of short stories of American biography, the tie-in for these stories makes it more universally appealing and well-suited for public and school libraries as well as a gift for readers, book-lovers, or history buffs of all ages. Books and reading have the universal appeal of something we can all understand, a skill most develop when young, and most can engage in until the end. The novelty of this book is that it puts the value of books and reading into the context of a common thread running through all lives, including the lives of the brave, intelligent and influential, and thus gives the reader a link or point of similarity or entry to help them relate to the stories and the people presented.

This book, as the title suggests, presents nine chapters, each dealing with a well-known figure from mostly American history (Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Susan B Anthony, Booker T Washington, Pearl S Buck, Louis L’Amour), the notable exception being the South African Nelson Mandela. Nearly all the characters were born in or very close to the 1800s, so the period of American history is quite specific, and this book would serve to provide a good introduction of the 1800s through to the 1900s. Although most of the characters are American, they do represent a couple of different ethnic or racial groups, and there are also a couple of women, so the appeal of this book should be broad.

The characters of the book are all historic, and one could imagine that the concept of this book could be expanded to include figures from different countries or different groups, including entertainers or sportspeople. The value of it as something to encourage reading among the young, and not so young, could be quite profound.

Strong points include the introduction, where the rationale for the book and the history of books and printing are overviewed, and also the casual yet informative style in which it is written. Its writing style, with storybook flow and non-elitist/discipline-specific language, makes it an ideal inclusion in even primary school libraries. Its strong bibliographic and historic research strengths make it equally suited to adult and secondary school collections. It is certainly written and presented in a very user-friendly manner, with an authoritative, well-researched and referenced

...a common thread running through all lives, including the lives of the brave, intelligent and influential...

style, including plenty of quotes. Each chapter begins with a brief overview of the person's biography, which serves very well to set the scene and entice the reader into the full chapter.

Other interesting features of this book include the decision to present the characters in chronological order of their births, beginning with the first born; the inclusion of a four-page bibliography, and a three-page index cross-referencing places, names, and notable historic American events. This is a worthwhile book for a variety of libraries and a good read!

Deborah A Cronau, Brisbane

Not to be under-estimated

Buildings, books and beyond: Mechanics' Worldwide Conference 2004: athenaeums, endowment institutes/libraries, literary institutes, lyceums, mechanics' institutes, mercantile libraries, philosophical societies, schools of arts and working men's/women's institutes: proceedings of an international conference convened by the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria at Swinburne University, Prahran Campus, Melbourne, Australia, 2-4 September 2004. 2nd edition. Windsor, Vic: Prahran Mechanics Institute Press, 2004. 430 pp. Paperback. \$77.00 plus \$9.00 postage (Australia) \$25.00 (overseas). ISBN 0 9756 0001 X. Also available as a CD-ROM \$60.00 plus \$4.00 postage.

The description of subscription-based schools of arts libraries and their ilk in Ralph Munn and ER Pitt's *Australian Libraries* (Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research, 1935) as 'cemeteries of old and forgotten books', like some of the other colourful judgements delivered in their Report, was deliberately provocative and broad-sweeping. There were in fact many exceptions among these institutions, which had originally been established mainly as places of learning for working-class people. There was considerable variation not only from one institution to another but also in the level of private and government support for subscription libraries from one state to another.

Some of the 'cemeteries' were even then thriving, in cities where free public libraries had not been born and where free library movements had not yet been conceived. In some cases subscription libraries survived for many years whilst efforts to establish public libraries faltered, as Michael Talbot shows in his *A chance to read: a history of the institutes movement in South Australia* (Adelaide: Libraries Board of South Australia, 1992). In many parts of Australia, the institute was a popular cultural venue for people growing up in the early twentieth century, as Martyn Lyons and Lucy Taksa point out in *Australian readers remember* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992). Some institutes are still going strong. Take the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, for example. It was founded in 1833, thirty-six years before the Free Public Library, Sydney was opened by the New South Wales Government. Today, half a century after the NSW Library Act might conceivably have sounded its death knell, it is still operating a lending library, mainly of fiction, as well as offering other member facilities and hosting events.

...remind us of the significant role of institutes in the past and their continuing presence

The proceedings of this 2004 conference, organised by Mechanics Institutes of Victoria (MIV) and attracting speakers from Canada, New Zealand, the UK, the USA as well as Australia, remind us of the significant role of institutes in the past and their continuing presence. In their hey-day there were over 1000 in Victoria alone and about 2500 in Australia as a whole. Around the world there are still many examples of these – the subtitle of this work enumerates some of the synonyms and variations – which during their lifetimes performed remarkable services for their communities. Some have grown far beyond their initial roles and are treasured institutions. Others are mere shadows of their former selves or distant memories, but are increasingly attracting the attention of historians and heritage-conscious communities. In the fifty-odd papers presented here, academics, institute officers, retired and practising librarians, researchers and others share their passion for mechanics' institutes.

We read of remarkable bodies like the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, which resuscitated itself and now boasts 500 members (and rising), paid staff as well as volunteers, and 300 lectures, scientific demonstrations and exhibitions each year. We learn that the Mechanics Institute of San Francisco lost all its 200 000 volumes in the 1906 earthquake and fire, but rose from the ashes and is today a collection of 165 000 items in 'an oasis amidst the crowded jungle of the San Francisco Financial District'.

Subscription libraries, or 'independent' libraries as they are sometimes known, are now leaner and fitter, Geoffrey Forster of the Association of Independent Libraries, tells us. His organisation was founded in 1989 by 12 surviving British subscription libraries and now has 28 affiliates with total collections of two million items. Member libraries range from the Tavistock Library run by volunteers, to the London Library, with 40 staff, one million items, 8500 members and subscriptions of over £100. Some have embraced modern library technology, with websites and online catalogues, and many have diversified to maintain their viability, offering venues for flower clubs, keep-fit classes, wedding receptions, antique fairs and even blood donations. Independent libraries are 'not the dinosaur you might at first imagine,' Forster declares.

The transformation of some early institutes into modern seats of learning is well illustrated by the Ohio Mechanics Institute, formerly a haunt of Thomas Edison, and now known as the OMI College of Applied Sciences of the University of Cincinnati. This institution has had a significant role in training in industrial design, engineering and architecture. The Rochester Institute of Technology – now with 15 000 students – began as a humble athenaeum in 1829. Their stories, and the reasons for their survival and success, make for interesting reading: as one would expect, dynamic committees and passionate individuals with a keen eye for trends and community needs figure frequently in the stories of the local and overseas institutions discussed.

Apart from the many very thorough accounts of individual institutions, there are also valuable papers on infrastructure, with considerable emphasis on the State of Victoria, where today there are 360 surviving land reserves for mechanics' institutes. These may indeed be vacant land or may sport only an old tin shed, but they may also be the site of a well-maintained and well-used facility, sometimes now the home of the local public library. Helpfully, some speakers deal at length with the challenges of heritage buildings and modern uses, maintenance, fire safety, accessibility and funding.

This is a stimulating and varied collection of papers with international appeal. It is a valuable addition to the publications available from the MIV, which include Pam Baragwanath's *If the walls could speak: a social history of the mechanics' institutes of Victoria* (2000) and Frances Clancy's *The libraries of the mechanics' institutes of Victoria: report prepared for Department of Infrastructure* (2000), as well as the proceedings of two earlier national conferences. Further information on the activities of the MIV, including its growing archive on Victorian institutes, is available at home.vicnet.net.au/~mivic/index.htm.

David J Jones, State Library of New South Wales

Libraries and Lovers

Lefebvre, Madeleine, ed *The romance of libraries*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006. 208p US\$25.00 soft cover ISBN 0810853523 (available from James Bennett Pty)

With such a focus on the need for and process of libraries building communities in recent years, it is refreshing to see a related spin, with the publication of *Romance in libraries*. Brought together from libraries across the spectrum and across the world, including Australia, this is a collection of true, short tales, as told by one of the parties involved, of how libraries were involved in their story of romance. Most are stories of romance developing in libraries, but some are about romances with libraries.

Organised by context, it includes happy, sad and bittersweet stories from public libraries (the largest section), academic and special libraries, bookmobiles, reference desks, intra-library, conferences, library schools and international connections. Interestingly, it also covers libraries, food and romance (including a matrimonial lasagne recipe) and other miscellaneous tales, including how a library saved a life.

The intention of the editor is to show the transformative and emotive power of libraries, something the virtual library cannot compete with. It is the importance of the buildings themselves as well as the people who inhabit them.

If you are looking for a Mills and Boon-type read, this is not it. There is no flowery language, just tales from the heart, from individuals who have experienced romance within a library of one form or another. There is no drawn-out anguish, just a brief, honest, first-hand expression of how people and places have connected in a romantic way.

The stories are short and to the point, but after reading them one has a sense of the continued importance of libraries as place, as well as their many other purposes. This is a 'feel good' book, with underlying lessons that should be well-learned by librarians across the board. I would recommend this title to all readers of true loves stories and to all librarians, to remind us of the importance of our buildings, as well as the people, collections and services within them. Whichever library sector you are in, Cupid comes knocking on the door of your building at some time!

Michelle McLean, Casey-Cardinia Library Corporation

The intention of the editor is to show the transformative and emotive power of libraries...

Speculative...

Freeman, Geoffrey T, et al. *Library as place: rethinking roles, rethinking space*. Washington, DC: Council on Library and Information Resources, 2005. 81p US\$20.00 soft ISBN 1932326138

The Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) commissioned six experts to write essays examining the role of the library, now and in the future. In the current climate where information can be obtained from any location via electronic means, these reports examine the repercussions and impact of this instant access on the design of libraries, where planning for the future library must allow for 24-hour access with services and technology provided when and where they are needed. The authors chosen by the publishers include four librarians, one architect and a humanities professor, each with a different view on library design and use.

Geoffrey Freeman, an architect, describes how planning of libraries must consider anticipated user patterns and take into consideration the institutional mission or goal. Freeman states that libraries which have collaborated and worked with planners and architects to integrate the new technologies into their facilities are showing dramatically increased usage. He believes libraries must integrate new information technologies with the past print collection to create a 'user-focussed, service-rich environment'. Planners need to look closely at the needs of the institution, and the library facilities need to be seen as an integral part of the organisation, with flexible space, group study rooms and multi-use facilities 'infused with technology'.

Christina Peterson describes the Dr Martin Luther King Jr Library – an unusual joint-use situation where two diverse libraries (one academic and one public) share space. With two separate entrances into a central space, a relaxed social atmosphere is encouraged, including permitting food and covered drinks on four levels of the library. The purpose of the two libraries is to promote five activities – information seeking, recreation, teaching and learning, connection and contemplation.

Kathleen Oliver gives an overview of the design and use of the John Hopkins Welch Medical Library. The aim is to bring virtual information delivery from the library directly to the scientists, researchers, staff and students where they work and study. The library has used two main strategies to achieve this: increasing electronic material and creating liaison librarians to assist faculty and students in using the information.

The book concludes with a brief summary and five pages of valuable further readings on library design, including web links. While the volume concentrates on US academic libraries, it encompasses information of relevance to all libraries. This interesting volume provides thoughtful insight into the design of libraries from a variety of viewpoints and provides a starting place for discussions on the future of the library. It would be of interest for librarians who might be considering the redesign of their library space and to accommodate future usage patterns, to allow libraries to remain relevant and useful to their clients, and to attract increased custom.

Kay Neville, Sydney

...thoughtful insight into the design of libraries from a variety of viewpoints and provides a starting place for discussions on the future of the library

'It's co-operation, stupid...'

Miller, William, and Pellen, Rita M, eds *Libraries beyond their institutions: partnerships that work*. Binghamton, NY: Haworth Information Press, 2005. 230p US\$39.95 soft cover ISBN 078902909X (also published as *Resource Sharing & Information Networks* 18, 1/2)

Question: What do local governments, government agencies, community organisations, regional education committees and library suppliers have in common? Answer: They are all part of the environment within which libraries operate. And as librarians recognise the need to forge links to enhance their service, they are able to identify an extraordinary range of opportunities for collaboration within this environment. In *Libraries beyond their institutions* Miller and Pellen have assembled a collection of papers which emphasises the vital role played by libraries in the development of modern technology-based societies. In the field of education they also show how partnerships can extend beyond the traditional classroom to on-campus writing centres, teaching and learning centres, information commons and graduate schools.

The two papers by Nancy Kranich and Elizabeth Curry highlight the key role played by libraries in encouraging citizen participation and civic engagement as a result of information programmes promoting civic concerns and issues. The notion of training and encouraging library staff to assume leadership roles in community building is being embraced by increasing numbers of librarians as many gain recognition for leading collaborative community projects. Work with ethnic communities, non-profit groups and charities, technology developers, library suppliers and International partners all provide partnership opportunities.

Ultimately, however, collaboration must provide recognisable benefits to all participants. An examination of 'what's in it for them' and 'what's in it for us' by Julie Todaro includes phrases such as maximise resources, solve problems, save/make money, improve customer service, create an information literate community, build a community. While these benefits are great from the point of view of the community, it is also necessary for the libraries to point to tangible benefits of collaboration. In fact libraries find an increase in support for and use of the library, widening and more efficient information networks, energised and enthusiastic library staff, increased funding from program sponsors, and an increase in public relations and marketing opportunities.

Libraries beyond their institutions is published as a volume companion to *Libraries within their institutions*, which explores creative ideas for internal collaboration, particularly within educational institutions. While somewhat limited by featuring only American examples and case studies, the information is sufficiently practical to be adapted and applied to most libraries and communities. It will be a useful reference for library managers and administrators as well as managers of community and government organisations and library vendors.

Helen Dunford, TAFE Tasmania

What do local governments, government agencies, community organisations, regional education committees and library suppliers have in common?

Moving out

Miller, William, and Pellen, Rita M, eds *Improving internet reference services to distance learners*. Binghamton, NY: Haworth Information Press, 2004. 219p US\$29.95 soft cover (also published as *Internet Reference Services Quarterly* 9, 1/2) ISBN 0789027186

Improving internet reference services to distance learners is a collection of articles that provide a snapshot of how libraries are catering for distance learners as distance education courses, and academic courses in general, move into the online environment.

Each article is an interesting foray into how a particular university is improving its reference services to distance learners. For example, one article discusses how Arizona State University library has integrated information literacy into the curriculum; while another looks at the integration of library services into online course at the University of Wyoming.

Most of the articles touch on similar topics, such as the importance of collaboration with faculty, the increase in the number of distance education courses, and the invisibility of library services to distance learners. Although this repetition is sometimes tedious, it does highlight the challenges and issues that face libraries in providing a quality service to distance learners, as well as the types of technology that librarians are embracing to reach distance learners, such as reference assistance through e-mail and chat.

The book chronicles how librarians have become more actively involved in online courses through utilising various aspects of course management software such as Blackboard and Desire2Learn. It also examines the development and implementation of an online information literacy course at the University of Maryland University College (UMUC).

The collection also looks at the role of online tutorials and how effective they are in providing effective library instruction for distance learners. It is interesting to note in this American publication that an Australian university's online tutorial gets a brief mention in the article titled 'Online Tutorials as Instruction for Distance Students'.

Librarians are encouraged to adopt marketing techniques such as branding and Website design to increase distance learners' awareness of reference support services. In her article, Mary Feeny discusses the development of a new Website for distance students at the University of Arizona Library, while James Fisk and Terri Summey discuss the marketing campaign at Emporia State University Library.

The collection also offers a look at the development of a small special library's internet reference services to support firefighter distance learners at the University of Illinois, and the distance library services for Doctor of Pharmacy students at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

Highlighting the recent trends in electronic library services, this book is a useful guide and source of inspiration for those in the profession who are looking for ways to deliver the best internet reference service possible.

Kimberley Rice, Griffith University

A useful guide and source of inspiration for those in the profession who are looking for ways to deliver the best internet reference service possible.

Worth reading...

Pantry, Sheila, and Griffiths, Peter *Setting up a library and information service from scratch*. London: Facet Publishing, 2005. 195p £29.95 soft cover ISBN 1856045587 (available from James Bennett Pty Ltd)

Today's library services, whether corporate, public, academic or special have been around in their current format for decades. So who knows how to create a library from nothing? It has been done in recent times, in organisations around the world. Not many people can claim this, but included among this experienced number are the authors of *Setting up a library and information service from scratch*. Their aim is to provide a practical guide to setting up a new information service within an organisation, regardless of type or speciality.

Starting with the basics of why such a service is needed and answering the hard questions, this guide leads the inexperienced through the myriad steps in building one. These include information audits, getting management buy-in, establishing the physical space, appointing and developing staff, internal and external support, services to be offered, promotion and training. The content is far from comprehensive, but detailed enough to give the new librarian a plan on how to get from the idea to service actualisation.

The references are quite extensive and point to useful further reading if the reader is in doubt or needs more information. The appendices include a diverse range of useful information, from copyright forms to press release and brochure samples, as well as library basics and lists suppliers.

Although based on the UK market, this guide would be of use to anyone in the position of starting a library. With the phenomenal growth of the internet, there is more pressure to close libraries than open them, so this guide is a timely assist to anyone having to justify information services within an organisation.

Although intended for the librarian and non-librarian with no experience in setting up a library, the content really speaks to the non-librarian, with considerable coverage of matters that librarians would already know, such as library networking and services to provide. This could be frustrating for the library professional, but other content on areas not so readily experienced by librarians could be very useful, including the sections on information audits, building management support, finding and organising the right physical space and developing library staff.

I would recommend this title to librarians starting a service or trying to build up an existing service in a variety of situations, including companies, organisations and schools. If you are in the position of having to build a new service from scratch, having to justify the retention of an existing service or just wanting to increase the profile of a small library, then this book is worth reading.

Michelle McLean, Casey-Cardinia Library Corporation

...to provide a practical guide to setting up a new information service within an organisation, regardless of type or speciality.

Teaching your grandma?

Rivers, Vickie *The branch librarians' handbook*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2004. 203p US\$39.95 soft cover ISBN 0786418214

According to the Australian Government Information Management Office (AGIMO), there are approximately 1550 public library branches in Australia, each of which would have a branch manager of some description. This book has been written for those people and others who work towards that role.

Until now, branch managers have had their experience and management direction as supports in this role, among other resources. Vickie Rivers now brings them another resource to assist them, *The branch librarian's handbook*. It covers the issues that branch managers deal with on a daily basis, from personal development, through staff and the public to management. These issues include the library organisation, focus, administration, outside support, managing yourself, supervision, managing staff, computers, managing the branch, collections, patrons with special needs, the community, programming, outreach and career development.

Initial chapters serve as an introduction to public library structure and organising yourself to be a branch librarian. They give background to the role, setting it in context. Issues then turn to staff, management and self on a more practical level, including advice on how to manage general issues, including the stress of the branch manager! Although it is based on the American public library structure, much of what is covered is still relevant to Australian public libraries. Even the appendices, which include many policies and guidelines, would have something of interest for Australian branch managers.

Rivers does not offer comprehensive coverage of any of the included topics, but rather overviews of issues. Some of the content seems trivial (eg 'your briefcase contents') and superficial in its coverage. A lot of its advice is common sense, and existing policies and procedures within a public library service would cover much of it.

Having worked as a branch manager for many years, I was fascinated by the idea of a handbook to assist in this position. Reading it took me back to my early years in this role and the issues that I had to deal with. It also gave me some new perspectives on issues that I had not thought about in a while and some ideas on new issues to pursue. Any branch manager would be able to get something out of it, as I did, but it is not a title that an experienced branch manager would necessarily have on hand for ready access. However, for those just starting out in public libraries or students who would like to work in this stream of librarianship, it is an ideal starter on the types of issues they will be dealing with as a branch manager.

Michelle McLean, Casey-Cardinia Library Corporation

...for those just
starting out in public
libraries

...the evaluation of larger collections where the list-checking method is employed...

Rosow, La Vergne *Accessing the classics: great reads for adults, teens and English language learners*. Westport, CT Libraries Unlimited, 2006. soft cover pbk. ISBN 1563088916 (available from DA Information Services)

The title led me to expect something different: an annotated list of classical works suitable for all readers except children. But it turns out to be a work intended primarily for tutors working with adult new readers and with students whose first language is not English.

La Vergne Rosow says that 'people who have read the classics have more interesting, richer, fuller lives than those who have not' – a contention with which few classics readers would disagree, although whether the relationship is causal or coincidental is perhaps debatable. The classics are defined simply as 'literature which has withstood the test of time', and the book's stated purpose is to guide and support all people concerned with literacy development, including librarians. Developing readers, Rosow points out, are likely to be intelligent and motivated, and many are quite capable of engagement with long texts.

Criteria for inclusion are set out in the introduction. All texts are either classic literature or 'authentic literature', which includes re-tellings of oral myths. The selection of individual titles and editions is influenced by factors such as prose quality, ability to make reading satisfying and worthwhile, print quality and general readability, the ability of illustrations to add value to the text, and affordability. In some cases audio versions and short dramatisations are included because of their ability to encourage a love of literature. Abridged editions have not been selected.

The titles are divided into five very broad chronological groups: Myths and Legends of Ancient Civilizations, The Middle Ages, Renaissance Literature, The Romantic Movement and the Victorian Age, and Modernism. (There are some very odd bedfellows: for example, I would not locate either Beowulf or Don Quixote in the Middle Ages, but they sit side-by-side in that section). Within each section there is a 'Collection' for each civilisation or author. The Charlotte and Emily Brontë Collection, for example, contains editions of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering heights*, a short dramatisation drawn from *Wuthering heights*, and a biographical picture book.

...intended primarily for tutors working with adult new readers and with students whose first language is not English.

Any list of the 'the best' is necessarily idiosyncratic. From an Antipodean viewpoint the texts appear overwhelmingly American and European, and only a small minority of the European authors (de Maupassant, Tolstoy, and a few others) are not British. While well-known British authors such as Jane Austen and Charles Dickens are represented, some others who might be thought of as obvious candidates for a work of this scope and length, such as George Eliot and Thomas Hardy, do not appear at all, and most of the texts are American. In the entire book New Zealand is represented only by Kiri Te Kanawa's *Land of the long white cloud: Maori myths, tales and legends* (Arcade, 1989). There are only passing references to African and Canadian literature, and I searched in vain for anything Australian. Author/title and subject indexes round out the work.

So, what use is this book to librarians? It is hardly likely to aid collection development, since many, probably most, of the editions listed will now be out of print. (Librarians who want to build up their classics holdings may find helpful lists of Everyman and Oxford classics, at <http://www.randomhouse.com/knopf/classics/about.html> and <http://www.oup.co.uk/worldsclassics> respectively.) The book could, however, assist in the evaluation of larger collections where the list-checking method is employed, particularly in the areas of mythology and American literature. Accessing the classics could also be an optional but useful addition for tutors and librarians working with adult new readers.

Barbara Frame, Dunedin Public Libraries

Different...

Schwartz, David, ed *Encyclopedia of knowledge management*. Hershey, PA: Idea Group Reference, 2006. 908p US\$275.00 hard cover ISBN 1591405734

If you thought that knowledge management (KM) was such a new field that there could not possibly be enough known about it to fill a whole encyclopedia – think again. Likewise, if you thought that KM was just another management fad, set to fade into oblivion – not so. Aspects of KM currently occupy over 15 peer-reviewed research journals publishing over 500 articles per year, as well as reporting the proceedings of major annual conferences and smaller events throughout the world. Knowledge continues to assume greater importance as a source of global wealth, and KM research is emerging as a major focus of organisational managers.

Dr David Schwartz, an internationally recognised expert who has published extensively on artificial intelligence, information technology and KM, has assembled an international 14-person Editorial Advisory Board for this encyclopedia. The Board and the authors have reviewed and revised the work of 170 contributors from 23 countries prior to publication. The resulting papers deal with virtually every aspect of the field and indicate that a consensus is emerging between researchers and practitioners as to what KM is, its core processes and the mechanisms that make it work. To facilitate its use for research and reference, the encyclopedia is divided into six logical categories:

- theoretical aspects of knowledge management
- process of knowledge management
- organisational and social aspects of knowledge management
- managerial aspects of knowledge management
- technological aspects of knowledge management
- application specific knowledge management

The articles are arranged in alphabetical order by title, but the table of contents by category facilitates finding articles on aspects of a given topic. In addition there is an extensive index and also an index of key terms, which are defined at the end of the entry in which they are used.

From a library management perspective, the section which allows the reader to follow the processes of KM is most relevant. An in-depth understanding of the ways in which knowledge, once it is created or discovered, is gathered, calibrated, integrated and finally disseminated or shared is of major importance to libraries.

An online version of the encyclopedia is also available for libraries at a reduced cost, or free of charge for purchasers of the print copy. This site currently contains only the 117 papers which make up the encyclopedia, but it will be regularly updated with new articles in the future. While the online version is easily searchable by a fast and accurate search facility, it lacks the 'Contents by Category' listing that makes browsing so easy and enjoyable in the print version.

This publication differs from a traditional encyclopedia in that it includes a number of speculative and experimental papers as resources for further experimental research. It provides an authoritative repository of KM concepts, issues, techniques and research, making it an ideal tool for policy decision makers, educators and managers who need to consider strategic aspects of the knowledge environment and its systems.

Helen Dunford, TAFE Tasmania

...an authoritative repository of KM concepts, issues, techniques and research...

