Australian Libraries Summit Update

Consultations are continuing at the state and territory level on the issues which have been identified by the Steering Committee as relevant to the Australian Libraries Summit. The consultative committees have utilised a variety of approaches in attempting to stimulate wide and informed discussion on these potential issues for the final Summit. It is realised that these issues in no way indicate the agenda for the Summit, which will be decided in August after feedback from the states and territories.

In the ACT weekly meetings open to all interested parties have been held. Generally, each session has dealt with two topics only and has been chaired by different people. Open meetings have also been held in New South Wales on 25 and 26 May to deal with all topics.

In the Northern Territory, each topic has been assigned to an individual who will organise discussions with interested persons. The results, when finalised, will be dealt with by a general meeting of librarians. This general approach has also been followed in Queensland and Victoria. The Queensland committee sent out the discussion papers to the relevant professional bodies for comment.

An open workshop was held on 19 May to discuss these comments. In Victoria, the papers have also been distributed to the relevant professional bodies or interest groups, and each group is organising its own session.

Tasmania has formed 12 subcommittees to deal with and comment on all the topics, most of which have now been dealt with.

A workshop was held in Perth on 20 May to discuss all issues. This open meeting was planned to deal with the issues in five sessions each chaired by a different moderator. South Australia also plans to hold an open meeting on 17 June to discuss the papers plus additional papers put to them by their state committee. A number of non-librarians have been invited to this meeting including politicians, bureaucrats and local government representatives.

Meetings in almost all states and territories have been attended by a member of the National Library staff involved in the planning process. This has provided the opportunity for clarification of many issues relating to the summit including expected outcomes from the state/territory-level consultations.

Megan Curlewis
Secretary, Australian Libraries Summit

Information Management in Local Government

An issue of increasing urgency from the perspective of both local government officers and information managers is that of information management in local government generally. An important aspect of this is avoiding duplication of effort in proposed projects and quick and easy access to existing information on a given topic.

Last year a national seminar in Canberra focused attention on information requirements within local government on an intergovernmental basis. Since the seminar several initiatives have emerged, contributing to the rationalisation of information flow within local government. A better understanding of the production of (and appropriate access to) information should eventuate.

One initiative that addresses these issues is that taken by the Institute of Municipal Management (IMM) based in Melbourne. IMM operates as a professional organisation for city managers, town clerks, and local authority chief executive officers. It is also the south-west Pacific agent of the United States based International City Management Association (ICMA). ICMA has designed a database of local government information known as Management Information Services (MIS). This database originated in LOGIN, a database designed by a Washington agency selected by the eight major local government bodies in the US.

The British equivalent of MIS is ACOMPLINE. Significantly, whereas ACOMPLINE is available internationally, MIS can currently be accessed only within the US. This issue has been addressed by the IMM and is a major strength in its proposed service.

The service to be offered is an indexing and referral service. The physical items are to be retained by the issuing body, thereby ensuring appropriate control over accessibility. The material to be covered is mainly that of in-house reports and/or other relevant council documents and reports, such as those produced by consultants for councils or other local government authorities. Within five years coverage is to include legal opinion and legislation.

Of significance to information retrievers is the fact that IMM is currently negotiating with ICMA to access MIS. This will be done either by receipt of a direct copy of their software or by telephone link-up to the US system. The latter involves expenditure of approximately $US750,000. As IMM is service-oriented and looking to cover costs only, it is relying on participative support from councils and local authorities throughout Australia. Users of the IMM scheme will be able to select the medium by which they prefer to receive information (dial-up search, floppy disc or hard copy).

To date the response from local government authorities to the IMM proposal has been good. Participation in the IMM scheme will require a rational approach on the part of councils to the collection and indexing of 'in-house' publications. Participation also provides access to local government information on an inter-governmental basis at national and international levels.

Suzanne John
Librarian-in-Charge
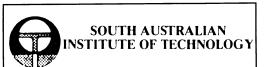Brisbane City Council Aldermen's Library

OPAC Update

The proceedings of the OPAC Update seminars held during January this year are now available. They contain all available papers from the two seminars including Charles Hildreth's paper. Proceedings may be purchased for $22 (incl. postage) from CAVAL Ltd, 10 Prospect Hill Road, Camberwell Vic 3124.