The mechanics of sharing

A new computer data-link between Sunshine-Melton Library Service and Melbourne's Western Institute has established Victoria's first shared library database between a public library service and an academic institution.

Thanks to the new computer line, the Western Institute, Victoria's first institute of tertiary education, now has direct access to Sunshine Library's computerised catalogue database and circulation control modules.

The new networking arrangements between the libraries will see the installation of three computer terminals at the Western Institute's St Albans campus. These terminals will be linked by a dedicated computer line to sunshine Library's LIBS 100 cataloguing system for selective use of the required computer applications.

The cataloguing system was developed by CLSI. There are more than 270 such systems installed throughout the world and over 1,200 libraries on-line.

The Manager of the Western Institute's Resource Centre, Fran Hegarty, is enthusiastic about the benefits the new networking arrangements will give students. 'The database we now share with the Sunshine-Melton Library Service effectively increases our information resources tenfold,' said Ms Hegarty. 'Ours is a model for other library services and academic institutions to set up similar resource networks. With increasing restrictions on library funding, the trend is clearly towards greater co-operation between existing library services and the development of shared databases.'

The Institute, unlike any other college in Victoria, has been set up to specifically cater for the post-secondary educational needs of the people living in the western suburbs of Melbourne. As such, it is community-orientated and seeks to facilitate community access to courses and information resources. It fully integrates the TAFE sector and an advanced education sector, courses at VCE and TAFE levels lock into courses at degree level and the programs are structured to allow students with suitable subject passes to move from TAFE into degree courses and vice-versa. The concept has proved successful. Over 1,000 students will be enrolled this semester at the Institute's two campuses at St Albans and Melton. A third campus is being developed at Werribee in 1988.

Fran Hegarty explains that with so many students undertaking such a wide range of subjects, the Institute's Resource Centre was being stretched to the limit. The Sunshine-Melton Library Service was the obvious choice for support with their excellent computerised catalogue, and the developed skills and expertise of the staff. 'Many of our students were their users and vice-versa, so why not share databases and make the Western Institute's Resource Centre another access point for the Sunshine catalogue system,' she said.

The Sunshine-Melton Library Service is amongst the top ten library services in Victoria circulating 830,000 items amongst 63,100 registered borrowers. Its non-English language collection representing 20 languages is
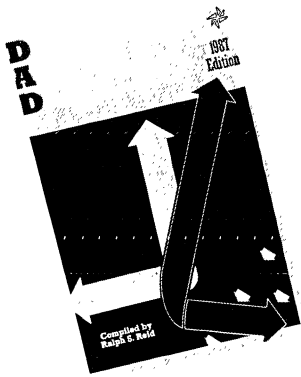

Pictured at the Western Institute's Resource Centre are its Manager, Fran Hegarty, the Chief Librarian of the Sunshine City Library, Brian Tyrrell, and Linda Makinson, former Systems Librarian at Sunshine who was instrumental in setting up the datalink.
Photo: John Keesing and Associates

extensive and reflects the multicultural identity of the western suburbs. Since 1984, the service has been using the LIBS 100 system, initially for circulation control, but currently incorporating MARC based cataloguing (ABN and original), acquisitions, LIBS 100 Datalink and Public Access Catalogues, with authority control planned for the next year.

Brian Tyrrell, Chief Librarian at Sunshine-Melton Library feels that the new networking arrangements will provide a better and more accessible service to the western suburbs' community.