

# Libraries in TAFE

by Dagmar Schmidmaier

In Australia, the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) sector is responsible for vocational education and training at preparatory, operator, trade, post trade, technician (or para-professional) and in some fields, professional levels. This system reflects Australia's historical development, its values and attitudes to education, training and employment and the diverse range of political, social, economic, demographic, technological and industrial forces that are, or have been, impacting upon Australian society.

TAFE is the most responsive education sector and has been able to respond quickly and effectively to government, political and economic priorities. This responsiveness to community needs has always been one of the characteristics that distinguishes TAFE from other education sectors.

In 1974, a major study was undertaken by Myer Kangan on the needs of the TAFE system. The report known as the 'Kangan Report' highlighted current problems and set out principles for future development. The 'Kangan Report' recognised the importance of the role of the library in TAFE and extended the traditional concept of a library to one of a 'Learning Resource Centre' (LRC). The LRC may be defined as a learning environment, one where a value added library and information service is provided. In addition it provides an environment where student-centered learning and teaching can take place. The LRC also supports the information needs of teachers and administrators as well as any consultancy or research undertaken through the college.

## Improved service

As a result of the Kangan Report the Commonwealth, through CTEC, has always placed an emphasis on the provision of a purpose built facility. However at the local level, including at the level of the college itself, TAFE libraries have often been assigned a low priority. This has not been the experience in NSW, where, since 1981, the number of colleges with staffed libraries has increased from 17 to 80. In this time a total of 57 new libraries

were opened 18 of which were purpose built according to NSW Library Services guidelines.

In NSW the quality of library services available to students and staff has been further increased by the progressive introduction of online catalogues and online circulation systems. By the middle of 1988, 22 TAFE college libraries, including 7 regional country centres, will be providing these services. The introduction of dial-up facilities will allow another 12 libraries access to these systems. The rapid and smooth introduction of online services has been achieved through TAFE's membership of CLANN Ltd, a co-operative library network.

Automated services have been introduced in some of the other states. The Northern Territory and Tasmania use a departmental mainframe system to provide online catalogues while in Victoria (a completely decentralised system) a number of college libraries have agreed to purchase the BOOK software package in the interests of co-operation and resource sharing.

Online catalogues are operational in 12 college libraries in Victoria, in 3 college libraries in the Northern Territory and in 4 college libraries in Tasmania. In Queensland the cataloguing module of the URICA system has been implemented at the Brisbane headquarters and circulation and OPAC in two college libraries. In the ACT the BOOK system has been purchased for use by the three TAFE colleges in that state. In Western Australia little progress has been made in the introduction of improved services through automation and South Australia is currently evaluating systems for implementation in five college libraries.

## Organisation

The place of Library Services within the TAFE organisational structures is different in each of the states and territories and depends on the organisation of TAFE itself. There have been major organisational reviews in Victoria, Western Australia, Queensland and the ACT during the last 12 months. In the Northern Territory, Western Australia and

Tasmania, TAFE is part of the Department of Education; in Queensland it is located within the Department of Employment, Vocational Education and Training; the state government in Victoria has established a State Training Board which, among other responsibilities, looks after the provision of technical and vocational training services, whilst the further education component of TAFE is administered through a Division of Further Education within the Ministry of Education; in the ACT TAFE is part of the ACT Institute of Technical and Further Education; and in NSW it is a separate department, the Department of Technical and Further Education.

Library Services in NSW and Queensland have a policy and planning unit located at Head Office responsible for the development and effective provision of library services within their state. In NSW the establishment of a Library Services Policy and Planning Unit at a senior level within the organisation has ensured the development and implementation of appropriate strategies for library services together with support for new purpose-built libraries, resource materials and network and system developments on a state-wide basis.

In Victoria the policy function is carried out by VATCL, Victorian Association of TAFE College Libraries, a voluntary co-operative group. In the Northern Territory TAFE is part of the Northern Territory Library Service, and responsible to the Assistant Director, Northern Territory Library Services. In Tasmania and ACT one of the college librarians takes on a co-ordinating role. In South Australia a library adviser has been appointed and in Western Australia major organisational changes are currently taking place.

## Networking

All TAFE libraries/LRCs participate in resource sharing within their own state or territory. In NSW the network concept is most highly developed. New South Wales TAFE Library Services comprises a network of 80 college libraries and three special libraries. The network concept ensures that all libraries

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benefit from the development and implementation of new services, systems and resource sharing. NSW TAFE Library Services is also a member of CLANN Ltd and participates in all activities supported by that network, including a shared database, online cataloguing, online circulation and online public access catalogues, reciprocal borrowing, inter-library loans and contribution to national bibliographic resources.

In the Northern Territory TAFE libraries are part of the Libraries in the Northern Territory Library Network, which includes all Northern Territory libraries — high school, education centre and public libraries as well as the Darwin Institute of Technology and the State Reference Library. The network is based on the Dobis/Libis software.

TAFE Library Services in each state and territory also participate in the National TAFE Clearinghouse. The clearinghouse is located at the TAFE National Centre for Research and Development in Adelaide and records and disseminates TAFE research nationally through publications and through the Australian Education Index which is accessible via AUSINET.

Another significant initiative in networking is the establishment of the National Working Party of Heads of TAFE Library Services established under the auspices of the Australian Conference of Directors of TAFE. The major aim of the working party is to discuss professional issues of national significance relating to the development of TAFE libraries and to provide advice to the Conference of Directors of TAFE on library matters.

TAFE libraries/LRCs have been involved in joint-use library developments, particularly in South Australia. This initiative has not been actively pursued in the other states and territories.

### Challenges

TAFE libraries/LRCs have been partners in TAFE's educational development and have experienced growth in terms of staff, resources, buildings and facilities. The degree of this growth has varied from state to state. However, in general, growth has not kept pace with student enrolments which more than doubled Australia wide, from 330,000 in 1974 to over 1 million in 1986. The requirement to serve students undertaking final year CAE and university courses has added a new dimension to TAFE library service provision. The acceleration of the TAFE schools program has also significantly increased the demands placed on the system. The major challenge for TAFE libraries/LRCs is to be identified as a priority area within each state and territory; to obtain an appropriate and equitable share of annual resources to ensure that the library/LRC can play a leading role in TAFE's teaching learning programs including the new industry initiatives and other priorities outlined in the 'Green Paper'.

### Information provision

The TAFE sector and TAFE libraries serve 70 percent of the formal post-school education enrolment in Australia

In supporting TAFE's goals, the collection development strategies developed by libraries focus on developing and maintaining current, up-to-date collections of materials to support teaching/learning programs in colleges. As a result, TAFE libraries hold some significant collections in specialist technical areas such as CAD/CAM.

In many instances TAFE college libraries face the additional challenge of providing service to users who have had unsuccessful educational or library experiences. Approxi-

mately 85 percent of students attend on a part-time basis which adds further challenges in providing an effective library service.

TAFE libraries and TAFE colleges particularly in non-metropolitan areas, are close to their community and are therefore a very significant element in reaching a wide cross-section of the Australian community. The role of TAFE libraries should be considered crucial in developing a new approach to library and information service in Australia.



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Melbourne	Mar 29	Mar 30	Mar 31	Mar 28	Mar 25	Mar 24	Mar 23	Mar 22	—
Perth	Apr 26	Apr 29	Apr 28	Apr 27	Apr 22	Apr 21	Apr 20	Apr 19	—
Brisbane	May 18	May 20	May 16	May 17	May 24	May 19	May 23	May 25	—
Hobart	Jun 7	Jun 10	Jun 9	Jun 8	Jun 15	Jun 14	Jun 16	Jun 17	Jun 6
Darwin	Jul 5	Jul 8	Jul 7	Jul 6	Jul 12	Jul 11	Jul 13	Jul 14	Jul 4
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