

National literacy conference:

first of its kind to bring together such a diversity of librarians and literacy workers

One of the most rewarding outcomes of planning and conducting a major conference is a positive response at the end of the day. This was just the response which met joint organisers, ALIA National Public Libraries Section and National Literacy Section, at the conclusion of the national conference: *Literacy and Libraries: Read All About It?* Held in Melbourne, 2-3 April 1990, the conference proved to be a landmark.

The calibre of the speakers, range of issues dealt with, and active involvement of all participants contributed to an exciting and stimulating 2 days.

'Well organised, thought provoking, awareness raising experience'; 'a good exercise on the interdependence of librarians and adult literacy tutors and how they can help each other'; 'I appreciated the chance to do some active work in the sessions'; 'good mix of speakers and topics'. This is just a small sample of the feedback participants provided as part of their evaluation.



International Literacy Year

READING 1990

In launching the conference, Margaret Whitlam, Chairman of the National Consultative Council for ILY, warmly welcomed all delegates and wished the conference a constructive outcome. Noel Simpson, Executive Director, ILY Secretariat, concluded the proceedings with comments about directions for literacy after ILY.

Two interstate speakers focused on research. Rosie Wickert presented a report on the first national survey of adult literacy, 'No single measure'. Terri Ryan outlined the current status of an adult literacy research database project. Local speakers discussed topics ranging from literacy in the workplace, literacy education in librarianship courses, literacy and ESL, and social costs of

low levels of literacy, to adult literacy, a Koori experience, and what is literacy and numeracy. Theoretical discussion of adult learning and literacy was not overlooked, and neither was findings of current research in Victoria.

On reflection, a unique aspect of the conference was the special mix of participants. Too often library conferences bring together librarians without the benefit of other practitioners in the field or related areas. Not so for this conference: over 90 people attended from many fields: literacy workers, literacy coordinators, librarianship students, educators, publishers, book suppliers, and librarians.

The interchange of views and ideas, particularly in the workshops and in the breaks for coffee and conversation, gave groups insight into each others' experiences of dealing with literacy issues. One literacy worker said she was particularly encouraged by the interest and commitment shown by librarians attending a conference in an area that is still not seen as a central role for libraries.

Participants suggested issues they wanted to see followed up in future workshops. The Literacy Section will use these suggestions in planning the next series of workshops, the first of which is scheduled for late 1990.

Victorian sponsors of the conference were: Rotary Club of Bentleigh, Baker & Taylor Books, TAFE Publications Unit, and The Bookery.

All in all, a landmark conference in this International Literacy Year. Proceedings are due to be published in a future issue of *Australasian public libraries and information services*.

Ann Le Lievre
Eve Stocker

National Literacy Section

▶ From 1 ...

ALIA (SA Branch) who so readily gave up precious time to staff the stand and take responsibility for providing the professional profile and the information.

This has been an important exercise for ALIA (SA Branch), not only as an opportunity to provide information about how to qualify as a librarian or library technician but significantly as another opportunity to publicly present the face of the Association and help increase understanding of our profession.

It was an opportunity to demonstrate that ALIA members are adaptive, flexible and essentially proactive to innovation, to demonstrate that we 'have taken our brains out of cold storage and are receptive to change' and to demonstrate that we are concerned, whatever our field of work, about the life-long education of our users through the provision of our information services and the value we add to those services. As Mike Rann also said, 'Unless we do this we will never be winners ... personally or as a state or nation'.

ALIA and its members were the winners.

Jan Heath spoke of the spirit of cooperation that is growing in South Australia in the April *InterAlia* president's column and this needs to be nurtured and encouraged to grow. Not just the cooperation between libraries, but also the continued awareness of what the professional and technician staff in each arena are actually doing and what the issues are that are currently impacting on each area.

This happened during the Careers EXPO with the members who staffed the display coming from all fields of librarianship and taking advantage of the quiet moments to find out what the latest developments in each area of the profession have been. But this was only a small step and it is only by taking this and other advantages that we will each enhance our personal skills and knowledge resulting in the way for a skilled and productive profession with all 'our energies harnessed rather than confined and limited'.

Whether the issues are reviews of libraries in Higher Education, funding for literacy programs in public libraries, standards for school libraries, award restructuring for PSA employees ... the outcomes affect us all as members of a united Association and profession. We all need to be aware of all the issues.

Di Booker
Convener, PEARS

Really Vital!

The telephone number for the ALIA National President, Lynn Allen, in *The vital link* is wrong, and should be replaced by (09) 427 3328. Please make note of this important change.