

Higher education library mergers in South Australia

No sooner had the 1989 merger dust settled over aborted attempts to merge Flinders University and the South Australian Institute of Technology, on the one hand, and the University of Adelaide and the South Australian College of Advanced Education on the other, than the 1990 winds of change blew up. The 1990 winds promise to scatter the constituent parts of South Australian higher education in different directions with seemingly more irresistible force.

If 1990 merger negotiations are successful the arrangements will result, maybe as early as January 1991, in a three university system in South Australia as follows:

- University of Adelaide incorporating: Roseworthy Agricultural College (already agreed) and City Campus of South Australian CAE.

- Flinders University incorporating: Sturt Campus of South Australian CAE.

- New University by merger of: South Australian Institute of Technology with Magill, Salisbury, and Underdale campuses of the South Australian CAE.

The names being proposed for the new university are either University of South Australia or University of South Australia (A University of Technology).

The 1989 merger proposal between the University of Adelaide and SACAE was proposed and then rejected all within a few weeks so time and energy expenditure was minimised. However, the Flinders University and SA Institute of Technology merger was on the go for 9 months and there was considerable interaction between the staff of the libraries at all levels. All of this resulted in a much better understanding among the staff and has facilitated a closer level of cooperation. With many issues identified for resolution, the management of the two libraries called a halt to discussions around the middle of the year pending a final decision by the two Councils on whether or not the merger was to proceed.

A significant disincentive to the merger, as perceived by Flinders University academics, was the very differ-

ent level of financial support given to the libraries of the two institutions. As a result, the Institute Librarian, with the support of the University Librarian, took the opportunity to press (again) for a better deal for the Institute Library. The 7.4% of recurrent budget allocated to the Institute Library in 1990 brings it to within range of the support usually provided in universities.

Budgets and the management of funds is but one of many issues which will have to be addressed either before or soon after the mergers are formalised. In the broad sense there is currently a mood to 'get the Merger Agreement signed and delivered first and worry about the details afterwards'. If the merger is happening, or has happened, answers to problems will be found. If too many problems are tackled in detail prior to a merger agreement, the molehills tend to become mountains. Clearly no one has the authority to make decisions on behalf of a new organisation until that organisation exists and senior officers, including the University Librarian, are appointed.

The College Librarian and the Institute Librarian are united in their view that appointment of the University Librarian for the proposed 'University of South Australia' must occur as soon as possible after some form of merger legislation is in place. That only one of the two can be appointed is one of those inevitabilities which comes with restructuring.

Another of the very significant issues is the selection of automated library systems. The University of Adelaide has Dynix, so the incorporation of a SACAE campus which also has Dynix will not present major incompatibility problems. Flinders University is currently evaluating tenders and will make a decision around the middle of 1990. The Institute has the longest history of operating an integrated system, having commenced URICA implementation in 1982 but will be merging with the major part of SACAE which made the more recent decision to go with Dynix. The new

Acid Paper

The voices of the dead
are growing frailer.
Along the high kilometres
of shelves
they are quarrelling in silence
and eaten from the edges.
The stiffening that held the tree
resistant to its years of wind
has made the pages crack.
The past that rides such
brittle shallows
is rubbed to rust between the fingers
and thoughts contract towards
the centre
shrinking from the light and air.
The works of Tennyson and Browning,
the newsprint that began a war,
the tracts that promised
English heavens, pornographies
Morocco bound,
the German of **Das Kapital**
are threatened by a pure amnesia
impartial as the laws of physics.
'More durable than bronze',
said Horace,
and set it quickly down.
Dulce et decorum est ...
mens sana in corpore sano ...
A poet may outlive his time,
more recently his work also —
and feel it crumble in the palm
before his bones are in the furnace.
Lenses like a dragonfly
are dreaming slowly at the surface.
We choose the past to take on with us
just as we have always done
and leave the rest behind like weather ...
that summer of the year 'fourteen —
and certain nouns abandoned with it ...
this sheet beneath the printer's kiss
vivid with its swift illusions.

Geoff Page



Examples of deterioration and insect attack