

SPECIAL LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION 1990

The Information Professional: An unparalleled Resource

'Becoming a resource that our parent organisation can't afford to be without' seemed the underlying theme of the 81st Special Libraries Association Conference. Held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, from 9-14 June the Conference wore the official title of *The Information Professional: An Unparalleled Resource*. In response to its theme many of the conference sessions were devoted to helping the librarian build a unique niche in their parent organisation.

The first 2 days began with keynote speakers who confirmed the key role of the librarian in the decade ahead.

John Naisbitt, author of *Megatrends* and *Megatrends 2000* discussed his vision of the five big social trends of the 90s:

- The renaissance of the arts and spirituality;
- the decline of the welfare state and the nation state in the face of growing economic regionalism;
- global economic boom;
- the emergence of a new rural economic heartland;
- the increasing use of English as a universal language.

He pictured a heartening future where societal problems will be defused by increased wealth and, importantly, better use of the 'worldwide information grid'.

On the second day information guru Richard Wurman suggested that those who learn to use the information grid best will succeed in the future. He challenged librarians not only to be the gatekeepers to information but also to develop new analysis methods and to help our users avoid information anxiety.

Throughout the conference there were sessions dealing with various 'core topics' that would be familiar to librarians in Australia:

- The increasing need to market services effectively.

This included a strong emphasis on the need to correctly position library services within the overall role of the parent organisation. A session featuring the Apple Computer and the Microsoft corporations was particularly useful in highlighting how these companies have libraries that have 'bought' themselves a role in all aspects of their parent organisations' business. They have done so by proving that a library can be a leader in adapting the parent company's product to its own uses.

One of the most interesting sessions was the 'Marketing SwapShop'. Attendees had been asked to supply ahead of time samples of promotional/marketing materials they used. The result was a collection of samples of hundreds of newsletters, bibliographies, bookmarks, stamps, posters, marketing plans which could be taken home to study for new ideas.

- Adding value.

A recurrent statement was the 'need to give your client more'. Many sessions focused on the techniques used by various librarians to add value to information, from interpretation to presentation.

- Learning to cope with and control your environment.

Perhaps the most controversial session concerned 'rightsizing'. The session focused on examples of libraries that had cut or remoulded services, and sometimes staff, in order to meet the economic demand 'to be of value'. The suggestion was made that too many libraries fail to reassess their services regularly or are afraid to take the initiative in making cuts. However in doing so we often can win new kudos from management for being practical, and find that we provide a better service in the end.

- The internationalism of information

Dave McCaughan, who wrote this report, presented the last paper in a full day seminar devoted to international information. The session focused on the growing uses for special libraries to tap into information from all parts of the globe and highlighted the problem that information sources are often unique to a country — the librarian in the USA cannot expect to find sources equal to their own in Australia, Austria or Indonesia. The attendance of some 1500 indicated the growing realisation among our US counterparts that American sources can no longer be considered to give a complete picture. The session was seen by the organisers as a breakthrough in focusing on the insular history of US information sourcing.

It should be noted that this was also part of the SLA's attempt to push its international charter. Membership is being sought from special librarians throughout the world and the Association hopes to attract more participation in its conferences and journals from non-American members.

Dave McCaughan
McCann Erickson Advertising



Australian Library & Information Association

Board of Education

Election of two members by the membership of the Association

Call for Nominations

Membership of the Board of Education is as follows:

- three professional members elected by the Professional Committee of General Council;
- seven members, of whom at least four must be professional members, elected by the membership-at-large of the Association;
- the President of the Association *ex officio*;
- the Executive Director as a non-voting executive member. (By-law 24)

The terms of office of four members of the Board end on 31 December 1990. Three members are now to be elected by the membership of the Association to hold office until 31 December 1993. The Professional Committee of General Council will elect the fourth member.

Nominations are hereby called for the three positions. Nominees must be personal financial members of the Association, however they need not be professional members.

Nominations shall be:

- in writing;
- signed by two personal financial members of the Association;
- countersigned by the nominee;
- accompanied by a curriculum vitae (giving full details of academic and professional qualifications) and a statement of concerns, each to be not more than 100 words.

Nominations close with the Executive Director, Australian Library and Information Association, PO Box E441, Queen Victoria Terrace, ACT, 2600. at 5 pm on 3 September 1990.

Board members retiring on 31 December 1990 are Anne Hazell, Christine Henderson, David Jones and Fay Nicholson.

Continuing members of the Board are Twila Herr, Eric Wainwright, Angela Bridgland, Vicki Williamson, Jean Bailey and Joyce Kirk.