

# Feedback

## An enthusiasm for research

### The National University, College and Research Libraries Section Workshop on Research

A whole-day Workshop on Research, in the middle of the 3-day RAILS Conference, must have seemed at the least inappropriate. Who would be interested in that? In the event, over 200: some even registered just for the day in order to attend and others no doubt attended primarily because they were present for RAILS anyway.

It was, by common consent, an outstanding program. The highlight was the session presented by Professor Mairéad Browne and Susan Edwards (both UTS) on their current research project, which seeks to establish a standardised method for user or client assessment of an information service. The preliminary results so far to hand suggest that user evaluation is based upon very different priorities than those of professional staff. The theoretical basis of the project is also of great interest, since it stems from work carried out in service industries such as retail shopping and refrigerator repair!

Other speakers to report on their own research included Clare Wilde (Macquarie University) on performance evaluation and its impact on library planning, and Paul Katris (Curtin) on library staff job satisfaction. Barbara Paton, Margaret Robertson, Jan Novak and Joan Jensen described their different approaches to supporting library research.

Peter Clayton (University of Canberra, and President of UCRLS) opened the workshop. He talked about overcoming the gap between theory and practice in librarianship, and urged libraries to undertake in-house research. Maxine Rochester had been asked to give the near-impossible state-of-the-art summary of research in reference and information services in only half an hour. The published version of Maxine's paper will enable her listeners to follow up some of the many studies to which she referred. The proceedings of the workshop will be published with those of the RAILS Conference.

Margaret Henty chaired the final session, commenting that what had been most apparent throughout the day was 'an enthusiasm for research' — a most appropriate theme for this report.

*Peter Clayton*

## RAILS Conference, 6-8 November, Canberra 1991

The RAILS Conference was held in balmy spring weather, with the theme 'Reference and information services — priorities for the future'. Two hundred and eighty nine enrolments were received for the conference, 189 of which were for the 3 days. This is the largest enrolment for a reference conference yet and should see all costs fully covered, with a small amount over to help the Darwin 1993 Committee.

John Levett, President of ALIA in his closing address to the RAILS National Conference said that it was the most stimulating and challenging conference he had attended for some time — the span of issues, the depth of analysis and the sheer enthusiasm of speakers and audience made it an outstanding conference. In his keynote address on Day 1, John set the tone for the conference — there are new demands being made on information services and librarians have to address themselves to these demands and make realistic responses to them. A panel discussion on copyright issues was followed by sessions future developments in reference services, Australian online scientific databases, the subject approach to information services and value added services.

Day 3 attempted to put some priorities on the demands placed on reference services. Eric Wainwright, Deputy Director General of the NLA, forecast that if librarians were not to be left behind in the business of providing information services they had to place the emphasis on the service rather than the information. Two users of library services supported the view that librarians should not become bewitched by the gadgetry. But attention

was also paid to some of the more sophisticated technology and its impact on users, and to services to the disabled.

The middle day of the conference was occupied by a workshop conducted by ALIA UCRLS. There was also a special training session on that day for public librarians, organised by the Victorian Group of the Public Libraries Section headed by Erica Maxwell. Chris Crocker most ably led the program which concentrated on techniques for training staff who work on public information desks. More detail of these workshops is given elsewhere in *in Cite*.

Thanks are due to Bet Dracoulis the Conference Convener, who, charged with the mission of running this conference by the National Section, and to all members of the committee who worked so hard to make this conference the success it was. ALIA's Conference Manager and the ALIA staff were invaluable in helping with all those professional conference organising tasks and were a useful complement to the Conference Committee.

RAILS also owes a debt of gratitude to the two sponsors — James Bennett for the conference satchels and expenses for one of the speakers expenses, and DYNIX for the name tags.

This was the first conference presented by RAILS since it became a National Section of ALIA. It has launched RAILS and its objectives on a sound course for the future.

*Averill Edwards*

*Bet Dracoulis, Conference Convener (on left) is seen with Emma Davis, ALIA Conference Assistant (middle), and Averill Edwards, Program Convener (on right).*



## The COOL Awards

### ACT Library Service ACT school libraries

The winners and runners up in the inaugural Canberra's Own Outstanding List awards (the COOL Awards) are:



David Foote, Canberra Times

At the COOL Awards, from left: Michael Gildea (who invented the name 'COOL'), Robin Klein, Paul Jennings and David Battey who announced the awards.

#### Primary Division

##### Winner:

Paul Jennings *Round the Twist* Penguin Books

##### Runners up:

Paul Jennings *The Cabbage Patch Fib* Penguin Books  
 Graeme Base *The Eleventh Hour* Viking Kestrel  
 Mem Fox and Julie Vivas *Possum Magic* Omnibus Books

#### Secondary Division

##### Winner:

Robin Klein *People Might Hear You* Penguin Books

##### Runners up:

John Marsden *So Much To Tell You* Walter McVitty  
 Robin Klein *Came Back To Show You I Could Fly* Penguin Books  
 Paul Jennings *Unreal: Eight Surprising Stories* Penguin Books

## Training the troops at RAILS

Christine Crocker, University Librarian, University of Tasmania, led the troops through the key elements of reference training in a 1-day workshop held during the RAILS Biennial Conference. It seems that many librarians find reference training a challenge, or even daunting. Access to train-the-trainer courses seems restricted in many organisations.

Issues such as needs analysis, content, presentation and evaluation were examined. It has become clear that although the size of institutions may vary there are many areas of common concern. Problems, such as maintaining standards, motivating staff with entrenched attitudes, coping with different levels of experience and

education, and learning retention, were raised. The workshop allowed participants to draw on a wealth of experiences, and to extend existing networks across sectors and share solutions.

In their evaluations the participants called for further training workshops that focus on specific reference issues. This is an areas that State groups may wish to include in their 1992 programs.

RAILS thanks Christine Crocker for conducting such a stimulating and challenging workshop, and the Public Libraries Section (Vic) for their generous financial support.

*Erica Maxwell*  
 Sunshine Melton Library Service

## Acquisitions Section — a recent seminar

The Acquisitions Section hosted a seminar titled 'The Electronics of Acquisitions: Standard answers' at the World Congress Centre on 14 November 1991. The attendance of 110 enthusiastic librarians and suppliers was indicative of the interest in obtaining records, transmitting orders, receiving status information and invoices and sending payment by electronic means.

Speakers included librarians working with such systems, bankers, computer-industry staff and an EDP auditor. The many threads of the program were drawn together by our overseas speaker Sharon Cline McKay from EBSCO USA. Sharon provided a realistic forecast of the future in electronic acquisitions.

The seminar also saw the release of *The Distributed National Collection*, which includes papers prepared for the Perth pre-conference seminar in 1990.

The publication, edited by John Thawley and Philip Kent, is available from the ALIA office, for \$20 (members), \$22 (non-members) plus \$3 p&cp.

*Philip Kent*

Acquisitions Section Committee

more **Feedback** continued on page 16...

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## Randolph Stow Young Writers Award

In 1989 the Geraldton Mid-West Regional Group of ALIA and the Geraldton Regional Library inaugurated the 'Randolph Stow Young Writers Award' to encourage young writers and to promote awareness and use of the Public Library Service.

The award also recognises the international achievements of Geraldton-born writer Randolph Stow, who has given his support.

The award is open to all children who reside in or attend school in the Geraldton Mid-West Region.

There are four categories, (Lower and Upper Primary, and Low and Upper Secondary) with a limit of one entry per child.

In the inaugural year, 330 entries were received, in 1990 264, and this year 377 from 22 schools. They were judged by a panel of local residents including several teachers, the Community Arts Officer and a retired librarian.

The local community provided excellent sponsorship, which enabled presentation of substantial cash prizes, certificates and trophies to major prizewinners and certificates to commended entries. The trophies were donated and made locally in an unusual 'open-book' design.

The presentation ceremony was time to coincide with Australian Library Week, and National Arts Week.

*K Owens*  
Secretary

Geraldton Mid-West Regional Group

## Emergency services libraries New network formed

ALIES — *Australian Librarians in Emergency Services* — is a network of librarians formed at a workshop at the Australian Counter Disaster College, Mt Macedon, Victoria, in September 1991. The workshop brought together 28 librarians from police, fire, ambulance, emergency services, parks and

Australian Counter Disaster College, the training, education and research branch of the Natural Disasters Organisation. The college fosters understanding and cooperation between emergency services in Australia. It provided the funding, accommodation and administration to



*These firefighters at a hazardous chemicals incident are supported by information on hazardous materials, chemicals storage, protective clothing and safe working practices.*

wildlife and forestry libraries around Australia. Many of us had previously made contact by telephone or occasional visits and were aware of shared resources and problems. We had never before had the chance to develop cooperative arrangements between our libraries.

This chance was provided by the

enable the librarians and a wide range of guest speakers to participate in a most productive week long workshop.

Emergency service organisations present peculiar challenges for a librarian. In order to respond effectively to user needs, the librarian has to gain an appreciation of the nature of the often hazardous and stressful work carried out by emergency services personnel, and to understand the culture of the service for which they work. Specialised information gathered from all round the world is required to enable the emergency services to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters. Guest speakers deepened our insight of these organisations and the nature of the problems they face as well as enhancing our skills in librarianship.

Much valuable information was gained in informal discussions among participants. Networks between librarians from similar services were immeasurably strengthened by this contact and a number of ventures such as joint thesauri and union lists were launched. The workshop concluded with a commitment to informal networking under the ALIES banner, with the possible formation of a more formal network, or even a special section of ALIA, in the future. The event was so successful that work has already begun on preparation for a second workshop in 1993.

*Anne Pickles*  
NSW Fire Brigades

## News from ELISS, NSW

### Not-the-Metcalf-Medallion Award

ELISS invites entries for its literary award. It's not just for students, but for any ALIA members who have something to say about education for library and information services.

The topic is: 'Library and information professionals and IT: do we really need more education and training?' Telephone Judy James of ELISS (NSW) on (069) 22 2597 to discuss it.

Don't be bashful!!! all we expect is excellence. A leading library automation company will be supplying the amazing prize money.

Watch this space!

### The (other) '92 Conference

In another exciting venture, ELISS (NSW) is joining with the Centre for Intelligent Information Management (CIIM), at CSU - Riverina, to sponsor a conference on Intelligent Library Systems. The focus is on the integration of knowledge based on 'expert' systems with other library and information technologies. It's on 25-27 September, so that those interested will have time to make it from Wagga to Albury for the 'Post-Conference' events there. Want to attend? Want to present a paper? Contact John Weckert, telephone (069) 22 2372; e-mail [jweckert@riv.csu.edu.au](mailto:jweckert@riv.csu.edu.au); carrier pigeon or whatever.

*Judith James*  
Secretary, ELISS, NSW