

# Feedback

## A good 1992 for Queensland Specials

President *Jean Dartnall* reports on a lively and productive program

**T**HE SPECIAL Libraries Section (Queensland) is having a busy year with its continuing education activities enlivened by a few social events.

We started the year with a seminar on performance measures for special libraries. This issue is particularly difficult for special libraries, who often have limited resources to devote to the problem and, on occasion, an unsympathetic management. Our speaker, Brenda McConchie, a former librarian turned administrator, was of great assistance to many of us. Now that more people with a library background are finding roles in other occupations, perhaps we should seek them out as speakers and workshop leaders. They have inside knowledge of our situation and yet can provide us with a valuable objective viewpoint.

We held an inaugural mid winter dinner, with Sue Kosse as guest speaker. It was such a success that a similar event will probably now become part of our regular program. Sue spoke to us on competency standards and competency-based training. It was valuable to have this prompt to explore a genuinely basic concern.

A half day workshop on questionnaire and survey design proved popular. This is an area in which librarians frequently need to operate, although most of us do not have specific training for it. A speaker from the Australian Bureau of Statistics was able to give us useful guidelines to prevent at least the most obvious problems. The ABS consultation unit will undertake seminars and lectures of various lengths on this type of topic and from our experience we would recommend them. Although we were asked not to redistribute the notes from this workshop, I do feel able to share one example of how careful one must be in preparing questions for surveys: 'Question: Length of residence?—Answer: 3 metres.'

We have the advantage at present of having the National Specials Executive located in Queensland, in preparation for next year's conference. We were able to prevail on the National President, Diana Rylatt, to talk to us about using spreadsheets in libraries. With this useful aid, Diana is able to maintain records for such things as expenditure against programs within her Department which have library expenditure charged back to them and expenses incurred on the corporate credit card, as well as accumulating useful information for future budget planning. It's also sometimes possible to provide the Accounts section with information they don't have, a minor triumph to be enjoyed.

Diana demonstrated a bibliographic citation program, Procite. Information on this type of software might form the subject of useful cross sectional meetings. I find that since I have moved from special libraries to an academic library, citation is still a matter of interest.

A particularly interesting special library in Brisbane is that operated by the Queensland Branch of the Australian Institute of Management. What makes it different from most of us, is that it houses and operates a bookshop alongside a more conventional (but impeccably managed) library. The opening of a new extension to the Institute's building was an excuse to hold a meeting there and hear Margaret Embon describe the operation of the bookshop and library.

Another item of excitement for us presently is the publication of the fourth edition of 'Special Libraries in Queensland'. As well as being completely revised, this edition has been improved by a much expanded index. Covering specials throughout Queensland it should prove invaluable for libraries, especially specials, throughout Australia. It is available from The Directory Team, Special Libraries Section (Queensland), PO Box 10156, Brisbane, Adelaide Street, Qld, 4000 for \$35 plus \$5 postage and handling. ■

## A catalogue is a reader service

*Meg Cameron* has been addressing the NSW Cataloguers

**T**HE OCCASION was one of the NSW Cataloguers Section's Mollie Thompson lectures, and the title was a quote from Mollie herself that Meg has often repeated.

The lecture was a plea for recognition of the work of cataloguers as providing a fundamental reader service: access to the collection. Meg spoke of the contrast between the old inflexible immobile card catalogue and the new online public access catalogue that responds to keyword inquiry, can be located anywhere, can provide access to any collection and can tell not only what the library owns but what it has on order, is processing, or may have in the

reserve or out on loan.

Cataloguers run on 'c's'—correctness, consistency, completeness. Inevitably they have to set priorities: backlogs indicate a priority of correctness over currency; a fast turnaround may show that currency has the priority, even if that means some loss of correctness and consistency along the way. And whatever the librarians think about the latter, it may suit the users better...

Meg gave a fascinating lecture, delivered with great humour. A very receptive audience numbering around fifty appreciated not only the lecture but also the fact that Meg had made a flying trip especially for the purpose, and to pay tribute to the memory of her friend. ■