

# Library services to Aboriginal communities in SA

A lively and wide-ranging program is developing, says Angela Sloan

The State Library of South Australia has an Aboriginal Unit, which has been established to identify and address the Library service needs of Aboriginal people in South Australian communities, through promoting the services and resources offered by the State Library. In

The Bray Reference Library and City of Adelaide Lending Library have also made donations, primarily of monograph material. Image Services and Conservation Services (of the State Library) together have documented Exhibitions, Launches and other activities by the Aboriginal Unit and bound these into photo albums. Whereby, we now have a small pictorial collection (and videos) of our activities involving Aboriginal people.

Metropolitan family groups, Aboriginal tertiary level students and primary schools with a high Aboriginal population have been our first priority target groups. We believe it is important to establish contacts and networks in these areas as these groups have been identified as our highest (Aboriginal) users. Our largest user groups are Aboriginal tertiary students, non-Aboriginal stu-

dent teachers and staff from public libraries. We are now running successful programs which can now be offered (with modification) to regional areas.

One such Outreach program is the *Make a Book* workshop, which is offered to interested Aboriginal community groups (including schools) with the cooperation of Conservation Services. The aim of the program is to increase awareness and use of non-traditional library services to and for Aboriginal people. All materials are supplied by Conservation services and are free of cost, which has made the workshops popular with schools. The workshops were offered during the September school holidays (1992) together with Aboriginal story telling sessions (involving local Aboriginal people). Some of the children made two books, one of which was used for their own Dreaming stories or just to colour in pictures.

At the community level, we have increased awareness of the State Library collections, services and resources amongst many Aboriginal communities, including schools and tertiary institutions with high Aboriginal

populations as well as various Aboriginal Units and sections within Government departments. This was achieved through many letter drops, phone calls and visits by the Aboriginal Unit and most importantly, followed up at regular intervals.

Achievements within the State Library include a book launch in March 1992 (or Raukkan by Aboriginal Author and Poet, Mrs Margaret Brusnahan), numerous *Make a Book* workshops at the State Library and in the community, annual NAIDOC functions and Exhibitions. In 1992 our Exhibition focused on successful Aboriginal Enterprise and small Business. In 1993 we shall display *Bush Foods and Bush Medicines* with the assistance of the Museum of SA and Tandanya Aboriginal Cultural Institute, an exhibition that has attracted interest from the Museum of Ethnology Osaka, Japan and from Maori people in New Zealand. A catalogue of the Exhibition will be sold at the launch of the Exhibition.

Earlier this year the Education Department (Aboriginal Education Unit) asked us to launch the new publication of *Recommended Books for Aboriginal Studies*. We have helped the Department of Social Security's Aboriginal Unit set up an Exhibition of *Aboriginal Achievers*. To finish the year we have planned an Exhibition of Aboriginal sports people to coincide with the National Indigenous Games. And the beginning of 1994 we have been invited to contribute to an Exhibition of *Aboriginal Women Photographers* by Tandanya, as well as many bookings for story telling sessions and *Make a Book* workshops. We are also discussing how we can take on our first Aboriginal work experience student.

At the State and National levels, we have attended numerous conferences both as participants and as guest speakers, including a radio national interview about the Aboriginal Unit's workshop and presentation at the recent, "National Indigenous Women and Museum's conference" in Adelaide. From which the State Librarian received a number of recommendations from the candidates on issues relating to Aboriginal Own-



Judy Gibson, Conservation Services, with children at a *Make a Book* Workshop

addition, the Aboriginal Unit is promoting and delivering Aboriginal Cultural information to staff of the State Library to provide further relevant and culturally appropriate service delivery to Aboriginal people.

At present the Aboriginal Unit has two staff members, a project officer, (Angela Sloan) and team support officer, (Isabel O'Loughlin) both of whom have familial ties with local Aboriginal family groups. Two project officer positions are vacant and will be filled in the near future.

The Aboriginal Resource Collection is the primary source of materials and information used by the Aboriginal Unit to answer the many queries we receive from library patrons, library staff, students, teachers and Aboriginal community members. The Collection is housed in the Aboriginal Unit and consists primarily of monograph material, videos, cassettes, periodicals, newspaper clippings, Aboriginal Newsletters and Papers, annual reports and a few information kits. We have also received duplicate copies of posters and pamphlets from various Aboriginal agencies and organisations as well as selected Government departments.

► ership and Cultural Management within Cultural Heritage Institutions.

Many new and exciting developments have been achieved in the last twelve months largely due to the many networks and resources of Aboriginal community people and Aboriginal workers (throughout the public and private sector) who share our concerns

about the need for culturally appropriate services and service delivery and the need to inform Aboriginal people about of the vast amounts of their cultural heritage within the State Library of South Australia.

If you would like any further information on projects, materials etc, or require some form of assistance please

don't hesitate to contact us. Perhaps you can provide us with more networks or simply be added to the growing list of contacts and resources. [Contact: Isabel O'Loughlin or Angela Sloan] at the Aboriginal Unit, State Library of SA, GPO Box 419 Adelaide South Australia 5001. Tel (08) 207 7313, fax (08) 207 7307. ■

## A Maori identity in New Zealand librarianship

*Chris Szekely, Maori Liaison Officer with the National Library of NZ, describes an exciting new development (with possible future parallels for Australia?)*

Perhaps the most dynamic movement currently impacting on New Zealand librarianship is the establishment of a Maori Library Workers' Network—*Te Roopu Whakahau*.

Though still in the early stages of development, *Te Roopu Whakahau* ('a group to encourage') is rapidly asserting its identity on the New Zealand library scene. Since 1991 it has steadily developed from a handful of Maori library staff to a network of over 130. Last year, at a

three day *hui* (Maori gathering) the majority of these met and agreed to formalise the network. A committee was elected and charged with the task of drawing up some terms of reference to create the new group's structure and objectives.



Members of *Te Roopu Whakahau* in discussion: left to right Sally Pewhairangi, Wharehuia Hemara, Margaret Tane, Raewyn Tipene Clarke

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With a mandate from the *hui*, the committee has worked steadily to create a formal relationship with the New Zealand Library and Information Association (NZLIA). In pre-Network days, very few Maori had any involvement with the association and fewer still were members. The NZLIA has responded by making a commitment to look at ways in which the network can affiliate on an equal partnership ba-

sis, and effectively bring the greater number of Maori library workers into the professional fold. The Association's Bicultural Special Interest Group is also continuing to support and strengthen the Network as it develops.

*Te Roopu Whakahau* has undertaken to play a role in promoting libraries to Maori clients, to promote communication between Maori library workers and monitor information issues as they relate to Maori. The draft terms of reference include a mission statement to

'encourage Maori participation in information work and education resourcing'.

The committee have worked hard since their election to give credence to the group's objectives. For example, *Te Roopu*

*Whakahau* made a submission to a recent Parliamentary Select Committee Inquiry into Maori education which stressed the important role libraries play in resource-based learning and access to information. The network is also producing a formal report for the Ministry of Maori Development on how Maori librarians can inform Ministry policies.

In October this year, *Te Roopu Whakahau* are publishing the second edition of *Te hikoi marama: a directory of Maori information resources*. *Te hikoi marama* ('the enlightened journey') is a comprehensive guide of those organisations throughout New Zealand with collections of specific Maori relevance and publishers specialising in

Maori resources. First published in 1991, the directory has become an important New Zealand reference source and an essential tool for Maori researchers. The network has obtained the rights to publish future editions.

Funding through subscriptions, sponsorship and revenue generated from training events has enabled the committee to create forums for communication. These include regular nationwide mailouts, a published newsletter, committee teleconferencing, regional meetings and an annual conference.

The network is spread across the full range of libraries and all levels of library work—although a disproportionate number of Maori staff are unqualified library assistants. This latter issue is reflected in one of the network's objectives 'to facilitate opportunities for Maori library workers'. Already the network has had some success in assisting Maori library workers to gain admission to professional training courses. Some Maori are turning to the network to endorse their library school applications in lieu of support from their own employing libraries.

The need for more Maori involvement within the library profession has become increasingly clear as New Zealand's bicultural identity develops. Maori researchers and Maori language learners are using libraries in greater numbers, bringing with them specific requirements and expectations hitherto alien to library culture. Many libraries are experiencing difficulties in appropriately meeting the needs of Maori clients. The future now looks more heartening as Maori library professionals through *Te Roopu Whakahau* seize the challenges of *nga kaupapa Maori* (Maori agendas) to uniquely enrich and advance the nature of New Zealand librarianship. ■