

## From 'just-in-case' to 'just-in-time'

Hanns Possin describes the response to change at UWS Nepean Library

With the demise of the binary system, the 'Nepean CAE' (1200 undergraduate students, 105 teaching staff and 11 undergraduate degree courses) became on 1 January 1989 University of Western Sydney Nepean, which four years later has 6300 students (including 320 Masters/PhD students), 560 academic staff and 36 degree courses.

The major problem the Library faced in January 1989 was how to support the research function of the new University with a collection barely adequate to support the teaching function of the former College.

The new technology made possible a policy of access to research materials on demand, rather than ownership in anticipation. However acquiring material *just-in-time* rather than *just-in-case* requires a different infrastructure and different skills, equipment and resource allocation.

This shift in emphasis from maximising collections to maximising access to collections, coupled with mass higher education, the ever-increasing amount of information available, and the shift from teacher-driven learning to self- and student-centred learning, means that there is also a need for improved skills in finding information. Thus the role of the professional librarian as educator—whether explaining the function of *see* references in printed indexes or negotiating Internet—is overtaking in importance the more traditional and passive role of acquiring and organising material for use.

It seemed that this change in functions, i.e. 'access' and 'education' should lead to formal changes in resource allocation and organisation of the Library. Consequently it was decided in May 1992 to add a third department to the existing Collection Services and Reader Services Departments.

The new department, called Information Access and Planning, is headed by an Associate Librarian like the other two departments. It is staffed by six Senior Librarians with some paraprofessional support. The major task of the new department is to support the research function of the University by facilitating access to materials wherever they may be held. The new department was staffed by redeploying existing staff and by the creation of a number of new positions, made possible by the rapid growth in student numbers, academic staff and courses.

We borrowed the ideas and approaches that have been successful elsewhere. The Senior Librarian positions are modelled on what is referred to as Liaison or Subject or Faculty Librarians, but there are some major differences:

- This is their only job;
- none of them is as good as all of them, i.e. the team aspect is of paramount importance;
- they have regular formal meetings with structured monthly reports;
- they each have a MAC Powerbook (it fits into a small briefcase) and can access online and networked information from the office of any member of academic staff;
- they subscribe to or access different electronic lists,

conferences, bulletin boards and newspapers resulting in extensive cross posting of information;

- they have their own line management structure with the Associate as leader;
- they provide *no* (direct) services to undergraduates;
  - they have their own budget ranging from stationery to conference travel;
  - they are 'the library without walls'.



Hanns Possin

Their major tasks are to teach information access skills to academic staff and research students; online searching of commercial and networked information resources; collection development, i.e. obtaining reading lists as early as possible, writing computer profiles for current awareness slips and supervising the checking of holdings against qualitative lists, e.g. the quarterly or annual OCLC List of Selected Titles for University and Research Libraries.

A second major change to services provided by the Library concerns the staffing of the Reference Desks (three major campuses). In response to the demands made on library services by mass higher education, the need for improved information access skills by undergraduate students and the pressure for extended opening hours, the Reference Desk staffed by professional librarians will be replaced with an Information Desk staffed by paraprofessionals as from first semester 1994. A reference consultation service will be available by appointment. The staff resources saved will be invested in small group, hands on continuous reader education programs, and extended opening hours. The literature is divided on the wisdom of reference by appointment, but as little as five years ago it was hardly an issue.

A recent visit by Senior Library staff to the USA showed that University libraries stay open later with skeleton staff, often part-time or even casual on the assumption that clients with information access skills can use the Library productively without a professional librarian being on duty at all times.

We have as yet no evidence, apart from general impressions and some favourable comments from academic staff, that our response to change is the most effective way to contribute to the quality of teaching and research at UWS, Nepean. This must wait for performance measures to be designed, evaluated and implemented.

We have however, been forced to deal with some specific issues, none of them new to academic librarianship, which are not always addressed. These include:

1. The importance for professional librarians to have teaching skills. The minimum we require is successful completion of the Basic Methods of Instruction course (BMI, NSW TAFE).
2. The electronic library generates a heavy demand for articles, research papers etc. Standard orthodox ILL policy and procedures often can not deliver. New ways of doing things must be identified (especially commercial sources), funded and implemented.
3. An in-depth reader education program is also a very effective marketing strategy. It creates heavy demand on limited resources. If that demand cannot be met,

it may be better not to create it.

4. Ultimately, the electronic library must operate on a cost recovery basis. Many academic staff do not wish to pay for a service, however much improved, which was free when it was print-based.
5. The extensive staff development program required to operate the electronic library, to navigate Internet or search and obtain documents using commercial online services, requires not only considerable basic

skills but constant updating.

The purpose of this overview is not to describe a how-we-did-it-good scenario. We do not know that. Nor is it obviously a well-researched critical and detailed analysis identifying all problems, real or prospective (e.g. career paths, demarcation issues, cost recovery). The overview aims to outline a possible response to change which may be of interest to other former CAEs and to academic librarians generally. ■

## Faith, hope and construction

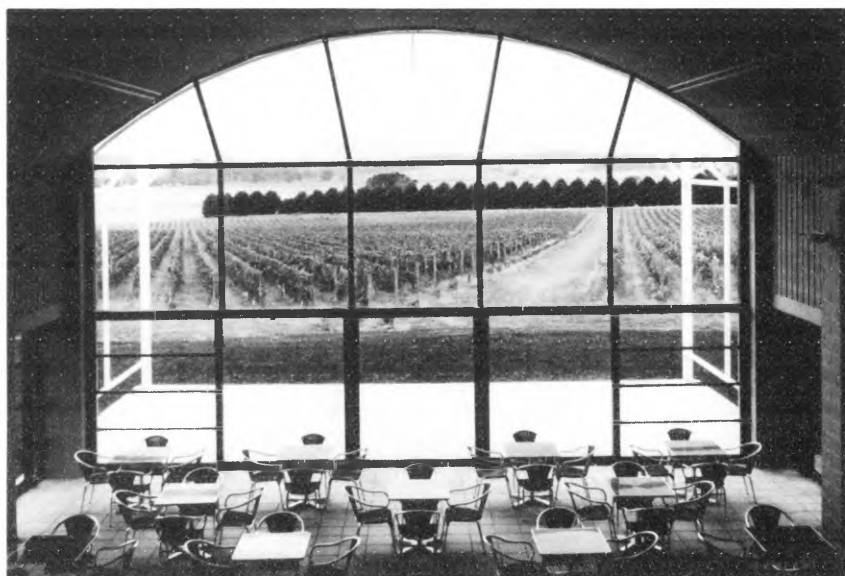
A new exhibition at the SLNSW examines Australian buildings from 1976 to the present

Is there such a thing as Australian Architecture?

A new exhibition to be held at the State Library of New South Wales will address this question and other important questions about contemporary Australian visual identity. The exhibition, of which BHP Steel is a major sponsor, will include 170 colour photographs by New York photographer Scott Francis. There will be background documentation on forty-five selected Australian building projects carried out between 1976 and the 1990's.

A range of buildings will be featured, by famous names such as Seidler, Cox and Murcutt, together with examples by architects such as the Corrigan and Edmond team who are currently transforming the way we think about Australian Architecture. Also in the exhibition will be some of the Mitchell Library's unique collection of architectural plans and drawings.

*Faith, Hope and Construction* is being jointly created by the Library's exhibition team (whose recent successes include *The Lewis Morley*, *Faces of Australia* and *David Moore Exhibitions*) and



*Domaine Chandon Winery, Yarra Valley, Victoria. Allen Jack and Cottier, 1987-90. Rural traditions have recently become a source of popular imagery in Australia. These traditions are sometimes superficially recovered through a nostalgic materialism. However, Allen Jack and Cottier's use of material in this project avoids an overt display of kitsch.*

Sydney Architect Graham Jahn, editor of the new architectural quarterly *Monument*.

Graham Jahn's new book, *Contemporary Australian Architecture*, will be launched at the time of the exhibition. It explores the development of architectural practice and thinking since the 1970's. Like the exhibition, the book

raises questions about the different ways we choose to look at buildings and the historical and cultural environment which has nurtured recent Australian architecture.

The exhibition will be located in the Galleries, State Library of New South Wales from Easter Saturday 2 April 1994 to 21 August 1994. Admission is free. ■

## Gosford library study

The report is now out, and Meredith Wallace announces its availability

Gosford City Library Service (GCLS) has recently completed a study of its operations, *Gosford Library Study*, jointly funded by the Gosford City Council and the State Library of New South Wales. The study was undertaken by Sharyn Briggs of the consultants Briggs and Mortar (now 3BC Consultant Planners).

The study aimed to 'assess the

perceptions and needs of library users and non-users within the Gosford City area in order to provide information to improve the provision of library services, and make that service more responsive to the needs of the community'.

The findings of the study incorporate information from users and non-users, as well as comments made by staff at discussions

held over a twelve month period. All NSW public libraries will receive a free copy of the report *Gosford Library Study* and its appendices under an arrangement with the State Library. Other interested people can obtain a copy from the Library Services Manager, Gosford City Library, PO Box 21, Gosford, NSW, 2250, price \$25. ■