

# Work and job redesign at eastern regional libraries

Public libraries are zooming down the information superhighway with customers expecting both the provision of traditional library services and access to all the new technology. Here in Victoria, public libraries are moving towards a new competitive environment where terms such as core/non-core service, activity based costing and client/provider split are the catch phrases of the day.

These changes in both the expectations of library customers and the changes in the political environment were anticipated by the management of Eastern Regional Libraries in the Outer Eastern area of Melbourne. It was recognised that fundamental organisational change would be required to meet the challenges of introducing new services and technologies with no new staff and to

gain the flexibility, efficiency and productivity required by the new competitive corporate environment introduced into Victorian Local Government.

To achieve comprehensive organisational change to meet all the new challenges the full participation and motivation of all staff was required. The implications of changing positions, directions for services and working conditions would affect everyone to some degree.

## Enterprise Agreement - the blueprint

An Enterprise Agreement was developed to act as a blueprint for how change would be introduced and implemented. It was prepared by a consultative committee made up of equal numbers of management and staff union representatives. This was the

first Enterprise Agreement to be developed for a public library in Australia and focused on the role of staff and management in the change process, the development of a team based organisation and the principles of work and job redesign.

## The work and job redesign process

The focus of the work and job redesign process at Eastern Regional Libraries was that all staff would have the opportunity to input and pilot the process. To ensure the success of the process a communication strategy was developed.

A facilitator, Jill Gael from Jill Gael and Associates, was appointed by the consultative committee to assist the development of a framework for Work and Job Redesign (WJR). Change coordinators were selected from the staff to act as internal change facilitators in the library service.

To analyse the operations of the libraries' main functions, work was divided into work systems. The work systems were defined by looking at the services provided by the organisation from a customers' perspective. A change coordinator and a team of staff then worked together to analyse current work practices, and map work flows to discover blockages and to develop options for the future. The work system teams then communicated progress and gained feedback from other staff to input into the process. Jill Gael provided training and support to the change coordinators, management and consultative committee at strategic stages in the process.

A completely new look organisational structure has been developed with the benefit of utilising the experience and ideas of all the staff. Staff have a great commitment to the new structure which achieves all the objectives expressed in the Enterprise Agreement. Along the way staff from all levels gained a greater understanding of the organisation, improved communication and greatly enhanced the skills of the staff. We have become a forward looking organisation with a structure based on the needs of our customers, service is the key to everything we do

John Binnion,  
Regional Library Director,  
Eastern Regional Libraries

## To know the past is to see the future

NZLIA conference, 3-7 September 1995

As the conference theme suggests we need to know where we have come from in order to know and understand who we are and where we are going in the future. The NZLIA conference, proudly supported by EBSCO, will be held in Masterton from 3-7 September 1995.

Registrations for the conference are NZ \$330.00 including GST, and daily registrations are also available.

Keynote speaker at the conference is Charles Landry of Comedia, Britain's leading cultural planning consultancy. Charles is the author of *Borrowed time: the future of public library services*. He will address the conference on *Future urban environments* and will also take part in a panel discussing the cultural value of public libraries. Other speakers include Barbie Keiser (USA), Professor Peter Hernon (USA), Dorothea Brown (NZ), Robert Berring (USA), and Diane Ferlatte (USA).

The conference is a mix of plenary, panel discussions and workshops designed to encourage active participation in the sessions. Sessions will be held covering issues such as intellectual property rights, the Copyright Act and its importance for libraries, library trusts/contracting out, and quality improvement programs.

The conference committee has also borrowed the idea of *Talk tables* from the American PLA conference to provide forum for small-group discussions on library topics of interest.

Masterton in the Wairarapa Valley is just 100 km north-east of Wellington. The Wairarapa is the home of some of New Zealand's leading vineyards and these will be incorporated into a library conference social program.

For information regarding the conference or a copy of the registration form, please contact the conference secretariat, NZLIA Conference, PO Box 6175, Wellington New Zealand, phone/fax (04) 472 7420. ■