

ing has been designed for future expansion. Computer cabling has been accommodated using floor boxes in a grid system so as not to create impediments for the movement of people or to tie workstations to permanent locations.

Patrons have access to the library's catalogue, CD-ROM networks, and the Internet from eighteen workstations connected to networked printers. Another three workstations provide dedicated access to the Internet. Access is also made available to a computer laboratory that is used by university staff as a classroom and for tutorials. In addition, library and IT services staff use the laboratory for instruction, providing general and subject-specific instruction for staff, students and, on a fee-paying basis, for the general community.

Reader seating, enough to accommodate 500 people, has been designed to acknowledge the different teaching and learning styles at the university. Individual and group study spaces, along with casual reading areas, are available and the furniture custom-designed and built to accommodate power and data to encourage users to bring in and use their own laptop computers or those that are provided by the university. Seven group study rooms are available, along with carrels and tables that can seat from two to six people.

The library, it is hoped, will foster close relations with the local business and general community. It may engage in various entrepreneurial activities based on the library's facilities, services and collections. With this in mind, staff have access to a twenty-five-seat seminar room located next to a kitchen and three group-study rooms that can also serve as breakout rooms for further discussion.

The building also houses gallery space and the library has hosted several art exhibitions and has used the space for special functions including book launches and author talks. The library is expanding on the success of its first literary evening to hold more of these types of activities.

While there is probably no such thing as a perfect building, the new library is proving to be functional, accessible, and an inviting place for discovery and discourse. Students and staff of the university certainly agree, as do the critics judging from the awards that the building has received. In 1997, the building won Australia's top annual architectural award, the Sir Zelman Cowen Award for Public Buildings. The library community is encouraged to visit Australia's 1997 Building of the Year to see if they agree with the jury's assessment that it is a 'contemporary classic.' ■

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Freedom of expression and access to information

Alex Byrne, pro vice-chancellor for information resources and chief librarian at the Northern Territory University has been appointed to chair a new committee on freedom of expression and freedom of access to information. He will lead an international committee with members from more than twenty countries.

The committee has been established by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) to advise on matters of international significance to libraries and librarianship in this area. It will deal with such issues as censorship of library and information materials, including those published via the Internet. Its establishment builds on the work of an interim committee over the last two years.

Mr Byrne noted that there is a wide range of ideological, economic, political and religious pressures which can limit access to information in libraries, or restrictions on librarians and other information specialists. The committee will work with other international bodies to ensure open access to information to support business, education, government and community activities.

He said, 'This is a vital issue throughout the world. Limitations on access to information and freedom of expression can arise in any nation. They can range from the political censorship of local public libraries now occurring in the south of France to the wholesale destruction of a nation's recorded history, as occurred in Laos and Cambodia.'

It is also a very sensitive area in which the special concerns and needs of communities must be carefully considered. The committee's responsibility is to assist libraries and information centres worldwide to realise the human right to know. ■

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