

Pathways beyond 2000

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Like other libraries, the CSIRO Network of libraries continues to be challenged by organisational restructuring at a time when the electronic information environment is changing rapidly. CSIRO must direct a large proportion of its budget to effective science programs. One strategy for achieving this has been to reduce the number of operating sites enabling infrastructure costs to be reduced. Another strategy was to restructure the former Corporate Information Management group. This took place in December 1996 when staffing levels were halved, and projects streamlined or devolved to divisional libraries.

As a sequel to the Corporate Information Management's restructure, a review of CSIRO's libraries was commissioned early in 1997. The review report, *Priorities and pathways: Review of the CSIRO Library Network* and its associated implementation plan was approved by CSIRO management in November 1997.

Prior to the review, CSIRO's library network, although demonstrating a high degree of collaboration and achievement, was loosely co-ordinated. It was supported by centralised purchasing of major subscriptions and a shared library management system. Datasets were purchased co-operatively and delivered to scientists' desktops through the SIM search engine or through the web. The review recognised that, as the cost of information services and products continues to increase, a co-ordinated approach

to planning is required to provide adequate standards of library services.

The Network has adopted a new organisational model — a formal federation — through which Network commitments and arrangements can be advanced. Accountability for service delivery remains at the business unit level. A Library and Information Access Group has been established which will co-ordinate and progress network actions and to collaborate with the revamped Corporate Information Management group to improve the strategic management of information in CSIRO.

The Network identified critical success factors in 1998 to assist in performance appraisal and management. The primary critical success factor is customer perspective, a need for quantitative and qualitative information, collected annually, about Network-wide information resources and services was identified. The Network has developed a survey and a methodology to obtain this feedback. Customer involvement in testing and evaluating library resources at the local level has traditionally been high, however, with the advent of electronic products, there have been more co-ordinated trials of products and datasets. Usage statistics deliver feedback on other utilities.

Another critical success factor is resource optimisation — achieving the best return on CSIRO's investment. Key aspects of this include economies of scale obtained in the purchase of resources,

the sharing of resources within the Network, and efficiencies brought about through operating as a single entity. Annual serials reviews are also conducted with reduced duplication of titles. However, the Network remains concerned about the declining purchasing power of Australian libraries and the consequent overall decrease in coverage of scientific serials in Australia. To address this issue, CSIRO participates in a number of co-operative activities designed to increase negotiating power with publishers and to promote resource sharing.

A further critical success factor is measuring success through innovation. Examples include a serials consolidation exercise which was conducted during 1998, whereby six Network libraries trialled receipt of 518 American journals. The results of that trial have proven useful for network decision-making. A major innovation was the development of a system whereby the decentralised indexing of CSIRO publications could be adapted to enable automatic collection of statistics on publications and reports for CSIRO's Annual Report to Government.

During 1998, automatic production of current awareness updates from databases on the SIM search engine was introduced, with direct notification delivered by e-mail to customers. Further demonstrating innovation, approximately half CSIRO's libraries are now using the Ariel system to provide users with scanned inter-library loans via e-mail, which has improved delivery time. Last but not least, the uptake of electronic journals is significant, and a CSIRO-wide trial of a suite of journals was progressed late in 1998.

Developing and sharing skills the Network's critical success factor number four. Successes in 1997 and 1998 include the development of a *Directory of expertise* within the Network and the co-ordination and evaluation of training activities. A further initiative was the practice of sharing local documentations and practices, including client information guides via a series of web pages.

These achievements have all been the result of Network-wide action and co-operation. As the CSIRO Library Network, its associates and its customers move towards the next millennium, there is a sense of excitement about the challenges ahead as we seek to optimise the benefits of electronic publishing while navigating a steady course through the costs and risks! ■

WOW! — get involved

Women's Online Week 27 October – 2 November 1999

Online Australia — a Commonwealth Government initiative to raise awareness of the ways online technologies are changing Australian's lives — is delighted to announce its latest initiative to encourage women all over Australia to discover the benefits of the internet. Women's Online Week aims to introduce women to the internet by showing them what is relevant and exciting on the internet, and also aims to encourage women to develop online skills and translate current skills into careers in information technology.

As part of the week Online Australia will launch the WOW! website — a comprehensive year-round resource for women. The site will feature an easy internet tutorial, discussion forums and information of interest to women.

Online Australia is inviting all organisations to participate in Women's Online Week by hosting internet introductions for women; holding an event related to women and information technology during the week; or participating in the Women's Online Week website.

Find out how to get involved by visiting <http://www.onlineaustralia.net.au/women>, phone 02 920 0911, or e-mail oa@noie.gov.au ■