

Rural and isolated libraries special interest group

Thelma Rungkat, secretary

The Rural and Isolated Libraries special interest group grappled with the problems of distance in 1999. Because of the scattered nature of the committee — with members in Geraldton, Darwin, Roxby Downs, Ballarat, Mackay, and Atherton — meetings have to be held by telephone. Telstra calls this a 'Conferlink'. It is expensive, and sometimes connections are difficult across such a vast area and across time zones. With a very limited budget the committee has only been able to afford two hour-long meetings this year. Among other matters the committee has discussed the outcomes of our session at the ALIA biennial conference in Adelaide in 1998, and we are planning a possible joint venture with another group for the Canberra conference in 2000. We have also produced a strategic plan.

To help defray the expense of committee meetings (approximately \$200 per meeting), the committee is working on a sponsorship plan to see if we can gain some funds to hold a seminar, or send members to major national conferences.

To keep members informed, two issues of the group's newsletter, *Aphelion*, have

been produced this year. Roger Hawcroft is the editor, and he is hoping to have another issue ready for distribution in December if funds permit. *Aphelion* can also be found on ALIANet at <http://www.alia.org.au/signs/rilsig/aphelion/>. Thanks to the work of Roger, RILNET, the groups network, has been upgraded and is slowly becoming a medium for communication between our isolated and remote members.

Thanks to the assistance of Alan Bundy the group was able to make a response to the National Inquiry into Rural and Remote Education, emphasising the importance of libraries in the life of remote communities.

We have visions of what could be done with adequate funding if we were able to get together as a whole group more often than just for one meeting at a national conference. There are matters which need the opportunity to meet face-to-face in one place for a few hours or days. When you have been operating in an isolated situation for a good deal of time, it takes a while to break down barriers and open up to other librarians and discover common ground. It is pretty salutary to realise that not even all our committee members have met each other face-to-face!

Communicating with members

Marie Therese Van Dyk, Distance Education Special Interest Group

The two key activities for 1999 were publishing a newsletter and organising the biennial distance education conference.

Two issues of the newsletter have been produced to date. The first included Anna Davies' summary of Anne Lipow's pre-*Online and on disc* conference workshop on 'Developing point-of-need reference service to remote users' and Debbie Orr's article on 'Globalisation and delivery of library services'. The second issue included a profile of Deakin University Library's off-campus services and a profile of Brisbane Institute of TAFE's Flexible Learning Network.

Monash University will host the 'Flexible Learning — the new paradigm' conference at the Gippsland Campus on 13–14 February 2000. Keynote speakers are Professor Edward Lim, university librarian, Monash University; Dr Alan Bundy, university librarian, University of South Australia; and Professor John Harris whose portfolio includes Monash University's Distance Education Centre. Both the University of South Australia and Monash University are key players in distance and flexible learning.

Ms Sara Ward is our international keynote speaker. She is based at the Sheffield Hallam University in the United Kingdom. The pro-

gram includes a combination of papers, demonstrations and forums for off-campus students. A number focus on practical issues, others concentrate on electronic services, joint programs developed by academics, and librarians or networks between different organisations.

Conference information, programs and registration forms can be obtained from Dolly Bishop, phone 03 5122 6317, or e-mail Dolly.Bishop@lib.monash.edu.au. Conference information is also on ALIANet [<http://www.alia.org.au>]. This conference precedes the VALA conference which will be held in Melbourne on 16–18 February. ■



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contribution to Children's and youth library services. For information contact Susan Campbell, Burwood Drummoyn Public Library, 4 Marmaduke Street, Burwood 2134. ph 02 9911 9999 fx 02 9744 5104

• **31/1/2000 Nominations close for the CYSS Bess Thomas Award**, commemorating an Australian pioneer in Children's librarianship. A grant of \$250 towards a project initiating or supplementing public library services for young people. For information contact Susan Campbell, Burwood Drummoyn Public Library, 4 Marmaduke Street, Burwood 2134. ph 02 9911 9999 fx 02 9744 5104

• **3–7/7/2000 21st Conference of the International Association of Technological University Libraries**. Virtual Libraries: Virtual Communities, hosted by QUT Library, Brisbane, Australia. Well known overseas/local speakers. Contact: Barb Ewers b.ewers@qut.edu.au For regularly updated information see: <http://www.lib.qut.edu.au/IATUL>

• **15–18/10/2000 LIANZA Conference for 2000**. Christchurch Convention Centre. Conference convenor: Gail Pattie, deputy university librarian, Uni of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch New Zealand, ph +64 3 364 2055, fx + 64 3 364 2007, g.pattie@libr.canterbury.ac.nz

• **24–26/10/2000 ALIA2000, 6th ALIA Biennial Conference**. Capitalising on knowledge: the information profession in the twenty-first century. National Convention Centre, Canberra. Conference organiser Conference Solutions, Brigitte Gunn, ph +61 2 6285 3000, fx +61 2 285 3001, alia2000.conference@alia.org.au, <http://www.alia.org.au/conferences/alia2000/>

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