

Report of Libraries in Isolation Conference

EIGHTY DELEGATES from around Australia attended the recent 'Libraries in Isolation' Conference in Alice Springs. Delegates came from capital cities, more remote centres such as Geraldton, Coober Pedy and Kangaroo Island, and from urban centres and Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory.

The Conference was jointly sponsored by the Library Association of Australia, Northern Territory Branch and the School Library Association of the Northern Territory. It focused on the needs of library staff, library users and potential library users in geographically isolated places and, as well, on the needs of those in every community who may be isolated in a special sense - the disabled.

Conference speakers included Mr Charles Emerton of the Goulburn Valley Regional Library Service. Mr Emerton indicated that isolation because of distance and loneliness could exist in areas of population as well as in 'the outback'. Mr Ron Davis, Director of the NT Library Service, spoke of develop-

ments in the Northern Territory in the same session.

Dr Graham Corr from Melbourne State College examined the means by which library staff can meet the needs of those isolated through disability, needs that should be met through as 'regular' a service as possible.

Ms Michelle Castagna spoke from the point of view of the disabled person and gave an account of the library services available and the needs these services fulfilled for her as a library user.

The means by which library staff working in Special Libraries in the major cities could reduce their geographical and intellectual isolation were examined by Mr Peter Russell from CSIRO, Black Mountain, Canberra, whilst Mr Edward Reid-Smith from Riverina CAE drew on overseas experiences to examine methods of continuing education for isolated library staff.

Beryl Turner from Adelaide College of Arts and Education called upon librarians to initiate intellectually challenging activities themselves, as well as to participate in continuing education organised by educational institutions. Anne Stanley from the northern region of South Australia demonstrated the concept of geographical isolation experienced by people living there. 'Living in these areas can make you feel the world has stopped and you are the one who got off.'

Mr Bryan Yates, Assistant Director General, National Library of Australia, presented a possible timescale for the introduction into Australia of new technologies, including videotex, videodisc, the domestic satellite and the electronic telephone

directory, their possible impact on libraries in the future and their feasibility for use in isolated areas. Telecom Australia presented a demonstration of the videotex system Prestel, via computer link from Birmingham, UK.

Resolutions passed at the Conference related to the proposed Sales Tax on books and newspapers, telephone charges for distant libraries interrogating data bases, inter-library loan charges, the Domestic Satellite, the implementation of the videotex information service in Australia, staff exchange between metropolitan and rural centres, joint-use libraries and the inclusion of a NT Library in the early stages of ABN implementation.

A limited number of conference papers will be available shortly from Mr Gil Jennex, SEA Education Resources, NT Department of Education, PMB 25, Winnellie NT 5789. Preference will be given to staff involved in provision of library service to the 'isolated' in distributing these.

Jan McFarlane and Robyn Young

CAE evaluates microcomputers

THE CENTRE FOR LIBRARY systems, Kuring-gai College of Advanced Education, has begun an investigation into the role of microcomputer systems in libraries and information agencies.

The Centre, established by Dagmar Schmidmaier, Chairman of the Department of Library and Information Studies, is interested in evaluating the potential of microcomputer hardware and applications software in library and information operations.

To date the Centre has been examining microcomputer systems in the school library. Already microcomputer systems have been purchased by a large number of Australian schools, and it is felt that very little evaluative work has been carried out to enable school librarians to make decisions about the possible role and limitations of such systems in library activities.

As the first step in an awareness program, the Centre is offering a one-day course to school librarians on Saturday, 5 December 1981. The course, to be presented by Dagmar Schmidmaier and John Kerrisk, will focus on the ability of present microcomputer systems to meet the needs of school library operations.

As part of its evaluation of the current use of microcomputer systems in library and information activities, the Centre is interested in acquiring and examining any application of software for library and information processes (eg catalogue and index production programs, circulation system programs etc) which have been written for a microcomputer. The development of a collection of such software is seen as an important step in the successful utilisation of microcomputer systems in information work.

Any details about existing library and information based microcomputer software can be sent to: John Kerrisk, Dept of Library and Information Studies, Kuring-gai CAE, Box 222, Lindfield, NSW 2070. Telephone: (02) 467 9270.

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