

# Australian databases: a national policy?



In earnest discussion during a break in the seminar are Peter Judge, CSIRO (left), Ian McCallum, ACI (centre) and Tony Ketley, National Library of Australia.

THERE WAS STRONG support for a national policy for the development of Australian databases at the seminar 'Australian learninghouses and databases: towards a national policy' held by Melbourne's Footscray Institute of Technology on 20 November, 1982.

More than 80 people from different parts of Australia discussed the development of Australian databases without a nationally co-ordinated policy to rationalise effort, resources and experience in this very important area.

Opening the seminar, Allan Horton, University Librarian of the University of NSW, introduced the idea of AACOBS acting as a co-ordinating body in the development of Australian databases. Summarising the views of some of the other speakers:

Gilles Chiasson, Manager of the Canadian Sport Information Resource Centre, provided an international perspective to the development of national databases, emphasising the need for international cooperation and the support countries like Australia could give.

Brian Yates, Assistant General Technical Services Division of the National Library of Australia saw finding a source of funding for database development as being of paramount importance. For cooperation, he felt that one should look to informal rather than formal mechanisms.

Peter Judge, Officer in charge of the Central Information Library and Editorial Section of the CSIRO, suggested that ALIC was well placed to formulate a national policy on information services, including database development. He also suggested that the newly formed Australian Database Development Association (ADDA) act as a rallying point and catalyst for future development.

Ian McCallum, Manager, Information Retrieval Systems at ACI, suggested that co-operation had succeeded where formal co-ordination of effort had failed, and that anybody representing Australian database development should represent the players rather than the spectators. He was rather pessimistic about convincing the Australian Government to provide funding for the development of an Australian information industry.

Neil Speirs, Editor of *Australian Business Index*, suggested that a national policy would be very useful in outlining the role others could play in the development of Australian databases.

The seminar concluded with unanimous

support for a resolution that ADDA be requested to survey the existing state of Australian database development with a view to inviting comments and suggestions from its members, and other appropriate organisations, as to the direction of future database development in this country.

ADDA was established at a meeting of interested people held at Footscray Institute of Technology Library on the day before the seminar. Its objectives were outlined in *In-Cite*, no1, 1983.

Proceedings of the seminar are now available from Bennett's for \$15.

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