

Children's Library Services in Tasmania

Following the release of the Trask Report on children's library services in Tasmania, the Tasmanian Branch of the LAA is working hard to publicise its findings. The Branch has issued press releases and has conducted a meeting on the subject of children's library services.

A total of 21 recommendations are set out in the report and the Branch believes their implementation would be a major step towards overcoming the existing problems, and restoring children's services to an acceptable level. (For a detailed meeting report see Tas Branch in 'Feedback' on page 4).

The report, prepared and directed by Margaret Trask, former Head of Library and Information studies at Kuring-gai CAE was commissioned by the Tasmanian Library Board and published last year. The final report was the result of a research project designed to assess the administrative support — both human and material — given by the State Library of Tasmania to its children's library services.

It acknowledges that the standard of children's services in Tasmania has steadily declined since the early 1970s. The main problems identified are a lack of specialist management and direction, insufficient training and performance measures, and a poor understanding of the public library needs of Tasmanian children.

Special funding over a number of years is strongly recommended as a means of replenishing the State Library's depleted stocks of children's materials. Pre-school children and young adults are identified as priority groups for whom considerable attention is urgently required.

Ms Trask's recommendations also high-



light the need to rationalise the number of small lending library service points in the State Library Service and to increase the opening hours at larger service points. Longer Saturday opening hours are seen as essential.

Liaison with the Education Department in developing a program of co-operation with school libraries is stressed in the report while a more developed media profile in newspapers and on radio and television, coupled with greater internal attention by the State Library to publicity and public relations is recommended.

The report concludes that there must be a re-ordering of priorities within the State Library of Tasmania if children's library services are to recover the national reputation they once held.

In particular, the appointment at a senior management level of a specialist children's librarian is crucial to achieving leadership in the planning, development and co-ordination of children's services. The designation of a children's librarian in each of the seven Regional Libraries and the development of staff training programs in library work with children are also of primary importance.

Liz Weir tells it like it is

Liz Weir is the Children's Librarian for the Belfast Education and Library Board who recently visited Australia after winning the Library Association's (Northern Ireland Branch) Andrew Chadwick Award. The award enables local librarians to travel outside the province for study purposes. Liz was also awarded travel grants from the British Library and the Library Services Trust.

While in Australia Liz has been learning about children's services in public libraries in NSW and has been telling groups of librarians about the library scene in Northern Ireland.

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One of the messages Liz has been concerned to get across is that overseas children's librarianship is becoming a declining specialisation. 'Overseas many children's specialists are being forced to justify their very existence. Perhaps one reason for this is the way children are viewed in the community. Children, and the people who work with them, are not given enough credit for what they do — for example, a university lecturer has a stronger position than a preschool teacher, but it is debatable who is more influential.'

'Outreach and extension were the in things in the 70s but now it's all about measuring output', says Liz. 'It is important that children's librarians keep statistics and fully document what they do. To maintain our status it's not just a case of Pooh parties and storytime, we have to show that we have aims and objectives and can follow through. We have to come up with the goods and show off our results.'

Liz actively supports the view that children's librarians need to promote themselves

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Return of a dynamic librarian

Dr Julie Virgo will help to make the 7th Biennial Medical Librarians Conference Health Sciences Librarians — the Dynamic Communicators' even more dynamic. She will be conducting a workshop at the conference on Wednesday, 16 September.



Dr Virgo began her library career in Adelaide at the State Library of South Australia. In 1966 she moved to the United States where she attended the Graduate Library School at the University of Chicago, gaining MA, MBA, and PHD degrees. She was assistant director of the National Library of Medicine funded training program for medical librarianship,

was a team member on the Biomedical Information Research Project, and taught courses in medical librarianship and library systems.

In 1972 Dr Virgo was appointed the first Director of Education for the Medical Library Association. She was responsible for developing and managing continuing education programs, establishing medical librarianship courses, and designing a national competency-based certification plan for health sciences librarians. In her current position as consultant and Vice President of the Carroll Group, Inc she is head of the Chicago Office, and works on assignments with libraries, information companies, and government agencies.

In addition, Dr Virgo has taken office in various capacities in the Medical Library Association and other professional organisations, and published 20 articles and three books. Recent publications have been in the areas of information management, marketing, strategic planning, and cost accounting for libraries.

So Dr Virgo brings to the conference a wealth of experience as a medical librarian,

educator and consultant. Her all-day conference workshop is entitled 'Strategic Planning for Health Services Librarians'. It is intended to cover the principles of strategic planning in libraries and aims to:

- provide background information on strategic planning as a process;
- identify problems with past planning efforts;
- describe strategic planning models;
- allow participants to practise the use of desired futures models;
- begin the design of an individual strategic plan.

Sessions should be informative and challenging. Registration forms and a detailed program should be available soon. So, come to Adelaide in September to hear Dr Virgo and a host of other experts in the field, and perhaps find out why Adelaide produces such world class librarians as Dr Virgo!