



BOOK REVIEW

Information Consulting in Australia: a practical approach. Proceedings of a Seminar held in Melbourne, 28 February 1986. Edited by Jennifer Goddard, Marion Dormer and Helen Campbell. Published by the Information Management and Consulting Association, Melbourne, 1986.

This collection of papers is a goldmine of tips, how-to's, and valuable information for the information consultant. I recommend it to anyone who is thinking of becoming an information consultant, or to those who are simply curious to find out more about the cut and thrust of small business. The papers are without exception interesting reading and will be an eye-opener to all information professionals. Some of it may seem a little aggressive to those involved in 'traditional' librarianship, unused to the hard sell world of small business, but it does give an idea of the challenges those businesses face. The papers are given by an interesting mix of people, some of whom are information consultants themselves.

Information is a service oriented profession, and information professionals are accustomed to giving away their product — information. It is quite difficult to put a value on your time, expertise and products. The hardest part of the business is telling someone how much it will cost, and then getting them to pay. For someone conditioned to be of service, it is very difficult to respond to a quick request for information with a quote. We should learn from the computer consultants, who are very good at charging for their services. Meg Paul and Jenn Evans (Freelance Library & Information Services) give some excellent advice on preparing cost estimates. One comment that disturbed me in their paper was 'it is helpful if you have a partner with a steady income or if you have a part-time position which allows you to work for yourself the rest of the week.' It is unfortunate that business tends to come in bursts but I suspect there are very few men who would go into business unless they thought they could support themselves and their families from it. While it may

be difficult at first to charge realistically for one's services, this must be learned if clients are to value these services — now and in the future.

Stephen Carthew is the Co-ordinator of the Centre for the Development of Entrepreneurs at Chisholm Institute of Technology. His paper defined an entrepreneur as someone who turns visions into business ventures. He says they do it by planning, and he describes the stages in compiling a business plan. Those stages include describing the service you are offering, who is going to pay for the service, developing a market strategy, (he prefers the term 'sales'), an operations strategy and a financial strategy.

Leigh Baker spoke from the interesting perspective of an 'intrepreneur', or an entrepreneur within a corporate structure. His paper gave a good solid business approach to developing a market strategy in terms of the business plan, the products and the selling methods, something librarians should know much more about before going into business for themselves.

Helen Campbell, (Campbell Information Consultants), an independent information consultant herself, gave a great wrap up of the seminar, its speakers and its themes. She gave a very perceptive analysis of potential markets for information services. Her paper makes fascinating reading, and its value is enhanced by the bibliography included.

While it is all very well to consider the benefits, and there are many, the legal and taxation aspects of small business must be considered carefully before taking the plunge. These are well covered by Moira Paterson, a solicitor in private practice specialising in conveyancing, small business law and FOI. The perils of business are perhaps best illustrated by Eleanor Whelan's paper. At the time, Eleanor was a Director of Triad/Infoquest, one of the oldest commercial information consultancies. Her paper not only gave an insight into day-to-day operations, it gave a good overall perspective. Since the paper was presented, however, Triad/Infoquest has changed considerably. June Anderson, of the Infoquest side, has taken a lecturing position at RMIT and Eleanor is freelancing. Liz Osborn, the remaining Director, will continue to market and support INMAGIC software, but will not be undertaking any more general consultancy.

I learned a great deal from reading all of the papers included in this work, and recommend it wholeheartedly to anyone tempted to try and build a business out of information management. It may discourage you, it may inspire you. If it inspires you, then you have in this work a good manual to help build a sound, profitable business. I wish I had seen it a couple of years ago.

Katie Blake

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What we might also lose however, will concentrate the minds of your elected representatives on General Council when they meet in September. The meeting is in Canberra, that city of 'wide embassies of spring autumn'. A place, indeed, to celebrate 50 years.

Alas, I shall have to substitute the glorious Indian summer awaiting the British Isles after the IFLA Conference in Brighton. IFLA . . . now there's another capital 'Frontline' topic . . . for 1988?

Alan Bundy
Vice President

LAA:50 Update



Taking it one day at a time



Keep the 'Vital' in your Vital Link

Missing Links no more! (Further updates for your copy of the *Vital Link*).

- South Australian Branch Continuing Education Officer, Pat Buxton, is now Pat Martin-Turner. Send mail C/- Campus Library, SA Institute of Technology, PO Box 1, Ingle Farm, SA 5098.

- NSW Branch Treasurer is now John Bartholomaeus. Please address all correspondence to 18 Queen Street, Glebe 2037.

- Conservation of Library Materials Special Interest Group — new phone number for the Secretary, Tom Taylor is — (02) 958 7662.

- Local Studies Section (National) — Chrys Meader is wearing two hats, that of Secretary and now Treasurer as well!

- NSW Branch General Councillor Tanya Whitmarsh should now be contacted at Ryde Municipal Library, Civic Centre, Devlin Street, Ryde NSW 2112, phone 808 0575.

- Cataloguers Section, NSW Group, has been reformed. Executive officers are:

President: Eugenie Greig, C/- Macquarie University Library, NSW 2113 (02) 805 7525.

Secretary: Frances Taylor, C/- City of Sydney Public Library, 321 Pitt Street, Sydney, NSW 2000 (02) 265 9691

Treasurer: Marion Dowd, C/- State Library of NSW, Macquarie Street, Sydney, NSW 2000 (02) 230 1414.

- TAFE Section (Queensland Group) President is David Bratchford, Division of TAFE, TAFE Administration Building, 59 Peel Street, South Brisbane, Qld 4104 (07) 840 4853. Please note this group was omitted from the *Vital Link*!

- TAFE Section (NSW Group) Secretary is Judy Engall (not Engal).

- Special Libraries Section (Tasmanian Group) Secretary has changed to Marilyn Evans, C/- Library, Attorney-General's Department, 39-41 Davey Street, Hobart, Tas 7000 (002) 20 178.

- Library Technicians Section (ACT Group) Secretary's last name is FEENEY not SEENEY.

Now you can arrange for a 'flex' day or a 'sickie' — single day rates for attendance at the LAA:50 Celebrations, 2-4 September 1987, Canberra, are as follows: \$55 LAA members, \$65 non-members, \$20 students (not in paid employment).

The single day fee covers attendance at the Conference, morning and afternoon teas and lunch. Fees for the social functions remain as detailed in the registration brochure.

The closing date for registrations is 14 August. Student applications will be considered after this date depending on space available in conference venues.

All registration enquiries to David Clark, (062) 98 0256.