

# Libraries in Colleges of Advanced Education

by James O'Brien

It is perhaps ironic that a description of College of Advanced Education (CAE) libraries should be written in mid-1988, when their future is very unclear. CAEs and their libraries have very much been the creation, and some would say political football, of politicians.

Created in late 1965 by the Martin Committee on Tertiary Education to broaden the scope and range of tertiary education in Australia, CAEs would now seem to be drastically changing their direction, function and purpose due to education changes forecast in the Dawkins Report *Higher Education: a policy statement*.

The Martin Report was actually presented to Parliament by the then, Minister-in-Charge, Commonwealth Activities in Education and Research, former Senator J. G. Gorton. During their 20 years of existence CAEs have been the subject of numerous federal and state investigations, reports, amalgamations, restructures, and even closures. These have been tumultuous times indeed for these institutions and their libraries. However CAEs libraries have played a significant role in the provision of library services not only to staff and students, but also to business and industry during their brief but florid existence.

## Unified tertiary education

The result of the Martin Report was to create a new tier of tertiary education in Australia — the advanced education sector, distinct from the university, technical and further education sectors. In their heyday in the mid-1970s, CAEs numbered more than 80 institutions, many with branch campuses and thus branch libraries.

Today over 230,000 students are currently enrolled in CAEs throughout Australia. The results of the Dawkins White Paper on Education are being hailed as the end of the 'binary system' of tertiary education in Australia. The new system to be known as the Unified National System de-emphasises the differences between all sectors of tertiary education. Already most former Institutes of Technology have been given university status and many smaller CAEs are amalgamating with older and more established universities. Of the former 80 institutions only 43 remain and that number will decrease drastically in 1989. Although the White Paper does not forecast any further forced amalgamations, it encourages smaller institutions to combine into larger tertiary bodies for both educational reasons and economies of scale.

In examining the contributions CAE libraries have made to overall information provision in Australia since 1965, it would be wise to briefly examine their original role and concept as defined in the *First Report of the Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Advanced Education* (June 1966). The Commission's report stated that in its visits to tertiary colleges, few deficiencies struck the Committee more forcibly than the inadequacy of the libraries. The Committee recommended Commonwealth 'unmatched grants,' direct to college libraries to overcome the lack of resources. The Report went on to note the deplorable state of accommodation for libraries and the very limited resource collections. It also noted that the average recurrent expenditure on CAE libraries at that time was a meagre 2.7 percent of total institutional funds. It went on to note that CAE library collections should contain up-to-date materials especially when they relate to professions. The need to have recent, relevant materials related to teaching as

opposed to large historical collections was stated. The Report also noted CAE libraries' responsibility for supplying information to industry, the importance of media in their collections, the teaching function of librarians (ie reader education) and CAE library's responsibility for education and training of librarians. This Report was indeed a seminal document in the development of CAE libraries. Further information about CAE library development can be found in Ward and Brown's excellent paper *Libraries in Colleges of Advanced Education*, and, in Harrison Bryan's *Design for Diversity*, 1977.

## Catering to student needs

From these inauspicious beginnings, CAE libraries have gone on to develop excellent collections and varied patterns of services often using the foremost developments in technology. For example, in 1986 recurrent expenditure had risen to above seven percent with capital funds also being made available for special collection development. The Commonwealth 'unmatched grants' allocated to CAE libraries during the 1970s went a long way toward building basic collections especially in the areas of media, journal subscriptions and back volumes. By the end of 1986, CAE library monographic collections exceeded 7.4 million books. Extensive film, video and curriculum collections feature in almost all CAE libraries. For a number of years now CAE libraries have been able to satisfy more than 50 percent of their interlibrary loan requests from within their own sector, and almost all are net lenders. The majority of libraries have had new buildings constructed, many of which have been award-winning designs. Many of these libraries encompassed the concept of 'resource centre' development which incorporated television and other media production as part of traditional library service.

In addition the numbers of library staff and their qualifications have vastly improved. In recent years this increase has been most noticeable at the library technician level. Also following the recommendations of the Martin Report many CAEs formed library schools. Indeed the CAE sector has been responsible for the education and training of the vast majority of librarians in Australia since the 1970s. CAEs have actively sought part-time students, especially in business courses. They have also encouraged 'mature age' students, often women wishing to return to the workforce. Several CAEs have over 50 percent of their students enrolled part-time. Libraries have therefore had to adopt service patterns to cater for these students' needs.

## In line with technology

CAE libraries have adapted to the use of technology in a most positive manner. This has been achieved both through networking as well as at the local library level. These libraries were quick to develop the necessary skills and purchase equipment for online database searching. Patterns of service differ here, with some libraries charging for online searching and others not. The overall usage of this type of information remains consistently high. For example, at Kuring-gai CAE, a college serving about 3,500 staff and students, total time spent on database searching exceeds that of the Australian National University. Several libraries are now making databases such as ERIC and MEDLINE available to students using CD-ROM

technology. Others are venturing into desktop publishing, interactive video and microcomputer provision to students and staff. Distance education, always an important part of CAE education, often uses teleconferencing, toll-free reference service to external students and media production of reader education programs. Most CAE libraries are members of LIBNET for electronic processing of interlibrary loan requests and several have begun electronic ordering of books and journals. Totally integrated library automation systems are a feature of many CAE libraries. At least one CAE has recently combined its Computer Centre with its library for effective provision of information in the electronic age. This pattern is likely to be followed by others in the 1990s.

It is perhaps in the area of networking, though, that CAE libraries have made outstanding achievements. These libraries early in their history formed both local and regional networks in almost all states. The success of CLANN in New South Wales and CAVAL in Victoria are two notable examples of such networks. These networks have been instrumental in database creation, co-operative ventures and resource sharing. Almost all CAE libraries have their entire cataloguing databases in full MARC records with catalog output being either online public access terminals or microfiche. The CLANN network has announced it will produce its catalog in CD-ROM format for 1989 supplementing its OPAC system. That system supports over 350 terminals in libraries in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, a geographical area much larger than the state of Texas.

Most CAE libraries are members of the ABN and either contribute records to the national database directly or through their local networks. The direct advantage to students can be seen from the statistics the CLANN Reciprocal Borrowers Scheme recorded for 1987. During that year over 100,000 items were lent to students from libraries other than their home institution. Similar statistics are available from CAE networks in other states.

## The new look

As stated previously the future of CAE libraries is not clear. Several CAEs are to be amalgamated with existing universities and others are gaining university status independently. The Dawkins White Paper calls for increased enrolments in the tertiary sector along with increased expenditure. It is too soon to say how and if libraries will benefit in the new system. Certainly, as for university libraries, the last several years have been difficult due to very tight monetary resources combined with both currency fluctuations and inflation. Recent years have seen the transfer of nursing courses to the CAE sector. In several states this transfer has been funded by State as opposed to Commonwealth funds. The transfer, which will be funded by the Commonwealth in the 1990s, has resulted in a significant increase in student numbers, mainly at the undergraduate level. Many colleges have already begun educational programs for overseas students, another area for growth supported by the White Paper. All of these changes create additional demand for library services. With these changes: growth, amalgamations, etc the very name 'College of Advanced Education' may disappear altogether in the coming years. Nevertheless what is clear is that, as we head into the 21st century, the

resources — both human and physical — that have been developed since 1965 in CAE libraries will continue to be the basis of a significant part of the information infrastructure for the education and culture of the Australian people.



James O'Brien is the head of the Resources Centre at Kuring-gai CAE, Sydney, a position he has held since 1977. Prior to that he was chief librarian at the Salisbury CAE, Adelaide. He has also had extensive experience in university, public and school libraries in the United States and Greece. He has been actively involved with many LAA activities and has been Secretary/Treasurer of the Association of Librarians in CAE's for several years.

**Call for Nominations  
Australian Serials  
Special Interest Group**

The Australian Serials Special Interest Group wishes to call for nominations for the 1989 executive and committee. Nominations will be accepted for the positions of Convenor, Secretary, Treasurer and six committee members. Please send nominations to Patricia Baigent, Bennett-EBSCO Subscription Services, 35 Mitchell Street, North Sydney, NSW 2060 by 21 November 1988.

ASSIG is also seeking corresponding members from all states of Australia, especially NT, SA, TAS, WA, and New Zealand. If you are interested please contact above address.

**Being there**

'And what's an information management consultant?' Six months ago I would have been able to keep you enthralled for an hour and five minutes on the finer points of how I was moved to resign from a secure job as manager of a college library to set the world on fire peddling my services to business and industry bent on resolving all their 'technology' problems.

I scoffed at those who smiled awkwardly and said: 'a brave step'. I was surrounded by an aura of confidence. After all, I had done all my homework hadn't I? I had in hand wonderful full-text retrieval software destined to turn information management on its head and everybody seemed to know at least one business or professional person who had made a near fatal mistake about choosing systems and choosing computers. Lots of people shivered with delight when I showed them the wonders of ZyINDEX — within three and a half weeks I would be an overnight success.

Three-and-a-half weeks turned into three-and-a-half months, overnight. I learned a number of very painful lessons. As a librarian I used to take a long time to make up my mind and I was one of the faster ones. Librarians don't make decisions about software as fast as I thought they might and even when they make the decision it takes forever to get the orders through all the redtape.

The reason for this article is that through all the highs and lows, I have discovered that you need the support of others in the profession. I don't mean that through your colleagues you get all the breaks or the right introductions. I would have to say that that's not where the opportunities are coming from. It is now very obvious to me that the most valuable thing I

have done in my career is to become really involved in the LAA.

I can now testify personally that anyone who goes out on their own and doesn't have the support and security of the LAA must at times feel lonely and cut off from the library world. I not only count as important the contacts and sharing of information, I could never really estimate the value of friendship. Sometimes it is just a meeting, a few drinks after a Branch Council meeting or it may be the opportunity to get together with the librarians at the coalface, laugh and scream a little, and, of course, gossip about who and what.

But, I do have a question. Why, with so many vital, energetic, professionally wise and innovative people out there, do we still have such a bad image? I see those people every day because they are the ones who are exploring all of the possibilities offered by the new technology. They are looking at being real information managers in their company or organisation. They understand information management and they are raising the profile of the library and the librarian. To these fine ambassadors I say, don't be shy. Share your ideas and your experience: the LAA needs your contribution in its Groups and Sections.

And to those who see themselves branching out to the world of consulting, don't — without first listening to good advice. You may not be lucky enough to your own personal small business consultant, but use the agencies, join a group or take a class. And find someone, a colleague you can moan to, groan to, plan with, travel with, start with, leave the project with, leave the used coffee cups with and you'll do fine. And by the way in case you are wondering, I'll stay as long as I can. I really love it out here on my own.

*Bev Kirby*

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