

Higher education library mergers in South Australia

No sooner had the 1989 merger dust settled over aborted attempts to merge Flinders University and the South Australian Institute of Technology, on the one hand, and the University of Adelaide and the South Australian College of Advanced Education on the other, than the 1990 winds of change blew up. The 1990 winds promise to scatter the constituent parts of South Australian higher education in different directions with seemingly more irresistible force.

If 1990 merger negotiations are successful the arrangements will result, maybe as early as January 1991, in a three university system in South Australia as follows:

- University of Adelaide incorporating: Roseworthy Agricultural College (already agreed) and City Campus of South Australian CAE.

- Flinders University incorporating: Sturt Campus of South Australian CAE.

- New University by merger of: South Australian Institute of Technology with Magill, Salisbury, and Underdale campuses of the South Australian CAE.

The names being proposed for the new university are either University of South Australia or University of South Australia (A University of Technology).

The 1989 merger proposal between the University of Adelaide and SACAE was proposed and then rejected all within a few weeks so time and energy expenditure was minimised. However, the Flinders University and SA Institute of Technology merger was on the go for 9 months and there was considerable interaction between the staff of the libraries at all levels. All of this resulted in a much better understanding among the staff and has facilitated a closer level of cooperation. With many issues identified for resolution, the management of the two libraries called a halt to discussions around the middle of the year pending a final decision by the two Councils on whether or not the merger was to proceed.

A significant disincentive to the merger, as perceived by Flinders University academics, was the very differ-

ent level of financial support given to the libraries of the two institutions. As a result, the Institute Librarian, with the support of the University Librarian, took the opportunity to press (again) for a better deal for the Institute Library. The 7.4% of recurrent budget allocated to the Institute Library in 1990 brings it to within range of the support usually provided in universities.

Budgets and the management of funds is but one of many issues which will have to be addressed either before or soon after the mergers are formalised. In the broad sense there is currently a mood to 'get the Merger Agreement signed sealed and delivered first and worry about the details afterwards'. If the merger is happening, or has happened, answers to problems will be found. If too many problems are tackled in detail prior to a merger agreement, the molehills tend to become mountains. Clearly no one has the authority to make decisions on behalf of a new organisation until that organisation exists and senior officers, including the University Librarian, are appointed.

The College Librarian and the Institute Librarian are united in their view that appointment of the University Librarian for the proposed 'University of South Australia' must occur as soon as possible after some form of merger legislation is in place. That only one of the two can be appointed is one of those inevitabilities which comes with restructuring.

Another of the very significant issues is the selection of automated library systems. The University of Adelaide has Dynix, so the incorporation of a SACAE campus which also has Dynix will not present major incompatibility problems. Flinders University is currently evaluating tenders and will make a decision around the middle of 1990. The Institute has the longest history of operating an integrated system, having commenced URICA implementation in 1982 but will be merging with the major part of SACAE which made the more recent decision to go with Dynix. The new

Acid Paper

The voices of the dead
are growing frailer.
Along the high kilometres
of shelves
they are quarrelling in silence
and eaten from the edges.
The stiffening that held the tree
resistant to its years of wind
has made the pages crack.
The past that rides such
brittle shallows
is rubbed to rust between the fingers
and thoughts contract towards
the centre
shrinking from the light and air.
The works of Tennyson and Browning,
the newsprint that began a war,
the tracts that promised
English heavens, pornographies
Morocco bound,
the German of **Das Kapital**
are threatened by a pure amnesia
impartial as the laws of physics.
'More durable than bronze',
said Horace,
and set it quickly down.
Dulce et decorum est ...
mens sana in corpore sano ...
A poet may outlive his time,
more recently his work also —
and feel it crumble in the palm
before his bones are in the furnace.
Lenses like a dragonfly
are dreaming slowly at the surface.
We choose the past to take on with us
just as we have always done
and leave the rest behind like weather ...
that summer of the year 'fourteen —
and certain nouns abandoned with it ...
this sheet beneath the printer's kiss
vivid with its swift illusions.

Geoff Page



Examples of deterioration and insect attack

▶ From 4

university will be a new organisation and evaluation of automated systems will have to start from scratch, although realistically the choice is likely to be limited to URICA and Dynix.

The distribution of 'central' services and facilities from SACAE among the three universities will present some interesting situations. In merger documentation, as so far proposed, staff will not be compelled to change institutions or campuses against their will. So, for instance, staff in centralised technical services at SACAE Underdale Campus will not be required to move to Flinders University or the University of Adelaide. Flinders and Adelaide will, however, have a legitimate claim for a pro-rata share of the technical services staff to support their mergers with the campuses of SACAE. If voluntary staff transfer is insufficient to meet the need, as appears likely, then financial support will no doubt be necessary to achieve balance. At the administration level there is an argument about physical accommodation at the City campus of SACAE. Part of the space is occupied by central administration and is not therefore seen as City campus space to be automatically handed over to the University of Adelaide.

Issues and problems aside, merger discussions are underway in a positive way. The Flinders/Sturt merger process was successfully launched recently by an informal wine and cheese get-together for the staff of the two libraries. The close cooperative relationship which has developed over many years between the library staff at Flinders and the library staff at the Sturt campus of SACAE augers well for the future of the Flinders/Sturt merger. The Flinders University Librarian and the Sturt Campus Librarian are confident of achieving a successful outcome.

Though less closely associated in the past the other two components of the merger process are also used to working cooperatively and are similarly taking a positive approach to coming events.

Whether these things are sent to try us, challenge us, frustrate us or entertain us, one thing is for certain — there will be very little peace in the higher education libraries in South Australia for the next few years!

Colin Taylor
Chief Librarian
SA Institute of Technology



Surviving a building project

Nothing in the librarian's previous experience can really prepare him or her for the shock of a major library building project: To some it is like being pushed onto a roller coaster with a group of complete strangers, to emerge, dazed and reeling, at an unfamiliar destination. Fortunately there are now a number of up-to-date works with which you can fortify yourself. There are new editions of two outstanding works on the planning and design of library buildings: Godfrey Thompson's *Planning and design of library buildings* (London: Butterworth Architecture, 1989) and Ruth A Fraley and Carol Lee Anderson's *Library space planning* (New York: Neal-Schuman, 1989). Only a few years back there was Philip D Leighton and David C Weber's new edition of Keyes Metcalf's *Planning academic and research library buildings* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1986). And now there is a completely new work by an American library building consultant with around 100 building projects under his belt.

Planning library buildings and facilities: from concept to completion by Raymond M Holt, which was published by Scarecrow in 1989, promises to provide 'a source of solid, realistic and functional information which will enable the librarian to participate fully in the facility planning process'. No mean promise, and, upon examination, no mean feat.

Holt really does demystify the necessarily complex planning processes, tracing the progress of a project, and the roles played by the various participants, through needs assessment, seeking funds, writing a brief, selecting a site, choosing a project team and surviving the design, construction and occupation stages. Issues are raised, solutions are suggested, pitfalls are identified, experience is shared.

Forty pages is devoted to a topic which is often taken for granted: how to read a plan, and not just understand it, but analyse it and spot things which a librarian knows won't work. It would take a long time to pick up all the valuable tips which this chapter provides, and during a building project, like on a roller coaster, time flies.

It's a pity that Imperial weights and measures are used throughout this work, and the index could have been better, but you will be able to cope with that, and the unfamiliarity of some of the American building jargon. For the novice, Holt provides an excellent grounding in the challenging processes of planning a new library building. For the more experienced, it is thought-provoking and a good memory-jogger. *Planning library buildings and facilities* by Raymond M Holt was published by Scarecrow in 1989 as no. 9 in the Scarecrow Library Administration Series. It costs US\$39.50. My review copy was supplied by James Bennett Library Services. (ISBN 0 8108 2203 2)

Briefly ...

Koalas, the little Australian we'd all hate to lose by Bill Phillips. At last, a substantial book about koalas for the layperson. Plenty of pictures, of course, but also maps, charts and diagrams, and a very informative text. How the koala came to Australia, the white impact, the Chlamydia problem and future prospects. Good bibliography and index. Nice production. Highly recommended. Published by AGPS Press in 1990 at \$24.95. (ISBN 0 644 09697 7)

Acronyms, initialisms and abbreviations dictionary, 14th edition, was published by Gale Research in late 1989. There are now over 480 000 terms deciphered in this massive work. Familiar to most reference workers, with its three-volume biceps-building format: volume one, which is itself in three parts, with entries arranged by abbreviation. Volume two is an inter-edition supplement (*New acronyms, initialisms and abbreviations*), and volume three is the *Reverse acronyms, initialisms and abbreviations dictionary*. It's come a long way from the 1960 edition which had a paltry 12 000 entries. Acronym coiners have a lot to answer for. What have you been doing, COCOA (Council to Outlaw Contrived and Outrageous Acronyms)? US\$208 for volume one. (ISBN 0 8103 5075 0 (volume one complete); ISSN 0270-4404).