

Redevelopment of ABN

NLA issues RFI

The National Library of Australia has issued a Request for Information for a new computer-based national bibliographic information system.

The system will replace the now 10 year-old Australian Bibliographic Network (ABN) and Ozline systems that are currently operated by the library. These services assist Australian libraries by helping them to cooperate, providing them with cataloguing and directory information, and providing them with online bibliographic information. ABN has, over its first 10 years, grown to the point where it now serves over one thousand participating libraries all across Australia. The library's aim is to move to a new system that will integrate the ABN and Ozline services, extend their services and provide greater cost effectiveness, flexibility and connectivity.

The library began an investigation into the feasibility of redeveloping ABN services in 1990. As a result, the ABN Network Committee and the library's top management have taken up the primary recommendation of the feasibility study, which is to redevelop the ABN system by moving it to a new, distributed and open systems environment. Based on information gathered through the Request for Information, the library will carefully examine the strategic and financial implications of that recommendation before reaching a final decision on the development path to follow.

The project is of particular interest from the point of view of Commonwealth IT purchasing policy. This will be one of the first Commonwealth IT projects to address Open Systems and use the new Systems Integration panel arrangements. The Acquisition Council set up for the project includes representatives from the Department of Industry Technology and Commerce and the Department of Finance. An industry briefing on the project was held at the library on 9 October. The RFI may be followed by a Draft Request for Proposal and/or restricted Request for Tender in 1992.

Warwick Cathro, Director of the library's Network Services Branch is the project manager. John Larocque, a senior consultant with DMR Group, is assisting the library in the management of the RFI process.

John Larocque

Geoscience information AMF hosts conference in Adelaide

Nearly 200 geoscience information specialists attended the National Conference on the Management of Geoscience Information and Data on 22-25 July 1991, organised and hosted by the Australian Mineral Foundation at Glenside, SA.

The concept of value in geoscience information in the context of geological exploration was introduced by Dr Eric Cameron (Western Mining Corporation

A 1-day Workshop on Indexing and Searching Geoscience Reference Databases was conducted in association with the conference by Lorraine Gerdes (SADME), assisted by Julie Roberts, Des Tellis and Lee Parkin (AMF).

Delegates at the final Conference Review Session overwhelmingly supported a motion to continue AESIS as the national geoscience reference database. The Australian Mineral Foundation was



Teatime among the exhibits.

Ltd), in the Keynote Address. This concept was reiterated and expanded in many of the other papers.

Most speakers also mentioned high cost as a significant factor in implementing effective information management and dissemination. But it was noted that recipients of free information usually do not appreciate the production cost of these services.

As a national asset, Australian geoscience information is widely dispersed in various government department, university and company collections and in many formats. Some materials are publicly unknown, inaccessible or confidential.

The Australian Mineral Foundation has worked diligently since 1976, with the cooperation of the State geological surveys, the Bureau of Mineral Resources, CSIRO, the National Library, the Australian Geoscience Information Association and many companies, to make this information accessible. It is believed that 75 per cent of published and unpublished materials relating to Australia has now been identified and captured for public access through the Australian Earth Sciences Information System (AESIS). However, there is still no systematic reporting of works generated by professional societies, universities and some government publishers.

confirmed as the appropriate managing body. This response was an expression of great appreciation of the 16 years of dedication to sustaining AESIS and in recognition of the exemplary world standard achieved in database and thesaurus production by AMF.

At the Conference Dinner, Des Tellis, on his imminent retirement as Information Services Manager, Australian Mineral Foundation, was presented with an engraved and suitably inscribed silver plate in acknowledgment of his contribution to information services for the mineral and petroleum industries. Bravo, Des!

Those interested in developments in geoscience information should contact the Australian Geoscience Information Association (AGIA — a co-sponsor of this conference) through the National Secretary, Brian Klyn, The Library, Geological Survey of Western Australia, 100 Plain Street, East Perth, WA 6004.

The conference proceedings, a 400-page document, are available from the AMF Bookshop, 63 Conyngham Street, Glenside, SA 5065 (rrp \$75; members of AMF \$60; universities \$67.50; plus p&p \$9.50).

Jocelyn Gardner
Macquarie University

Database '91 Tokyo

The Database Promotion Centre (DPC) in Japan recently invited Liz Oley, as President of the Australian Database Development Association (ADDA), to speak on the Online Industry in Australia at a symposium on 'Electronic Information in the Pacific Rim Region: challenges and tasks' held in conjunction with Database '91 Tokyo from 4-6 September. The organisers aim to become the third major online conference, along with London and New York.

Speakers at the symposium included representatives from China, Singapore, Korea and Japan. Many local and overseas database vendors participated in the exhibition, which attracted over 30 000 visitors.

DPC has been recently involved in research and development in several areas — machine translation, retrieval of Japanese databases by English keywords and the production of a CD-ROM with the Japanese Patent Office. The size of the database market in Japan was almost 200 billion Yen in 1990, an increase of 20 per cent on the previous year.

Following Database '91 Tokyo, Liz visited several organisations including a company involved in machine translation (from English to Japanese) and one specialising in multimedia and High-Definition TV (HDTV) which had an impressive range of products. These included a CD-ROM XA educational product on the five senses, Japan MARC on disc, a CD-I product on birdwatching, a multimedia disc with a touch screen demonstrating calligraphy, and an Intelligent card used for X-ray history and medical records in hospitals.

Near Kyoto she visited the International Research Centre for Japanese Studies, which is involved in a project to locate Japanese art held outside the country.

She also attended an HDTV Summit held in the Gifu Museum of Fine Arts at which HDTV directors from New York and Paris spoke. The museum shows HDTV programs to groups of visitors as an introduction to the collection — a world first. It also introduced the first mobile van to take HDTV programs to people in isolated areas.

The visit to Japan was informative, interesting and enjoyable and the hospitality outstanding.

Liz Oley □



Taken at the Reception for the opening of Database '91 Tokyo. Mr Miyakawa, President, Japan Database Industry Association; Liz Oley, President, Australian Database Development Association; and Mr Kim, President, Korean Database Industry Association.

Librarians hate family historians

'If there is one word that I hate more than *grandfather* it's *great grandfather*.'
Quote from a Mitchell librarian of 30 years ago.

Family historians are giving librarians the willies!

Family history is by its very nature a personal thing — others may have written a book on your family but you are the one who is going to make the big break through.

Family historians are active participants in a 'doing' thing. The tools they use are often on fiche while the reference given could easily be on film or in a book, for this reason they are more mobile than ordinary library users.

Family historians talk among themselves to the annoyance of other library users. Quite often, this is a good sign — someone is helping and guiding someone else — there is no teacher, professor or previous training in academic occupations to help family historians through the maze so they must help each other. Consequently librarians find family historians to be noisy, chattering people.

Librarians are prepared and trained to point the way to historians, school children and researchers in other fields, and because these people have their teachers, professors or academic training to support them, pointing the way is sufficient. Quite correctly librarians don't think that they should be called on to be teachers.

Librarians are unable to give the time to help this breed of historians who wish to practise a discipline which is new to all. Added to this, librarians have not been taught family history discipline themselves so they feel inadequate when asked for help in this line. Many librarians have little knowledge of the family history source material held by the library they work in.

Unfortunately the literacy of family historians ranges from excellent to nil, knowledge of technique is expensive to come by and most can't afford either the time or money required. They rely on finding a knowledgeable librarian or family historian.

A Family Historian □

(AFH — name and address supplied — is not a member, but this seemed an eloquently put viewpoint that may heed some response. What do you think? Ed.)



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Talking newspapers

A new service in Italian

The State Library of NSW had the pleasure to have the Honourable R J L Hawke, Prime Minister of Australia visit the library for the launch of the *Talking La Fiamma/Il Globo*.

The *Talking La Fiamma/Il Globo* is an Audio Newspaper in Italian for the Print Handicapped. It is a pilot project funded through a generous grant from Australian Bicentennial Multicultural Foundation with the permission of the publishers of *La Fiamma* and *Il Globo* produced for the Roundtable on Materials for Print Handicapped Readers by the Royal Blind Society in cooperation with the State Library of New South Wales.

The Australian Bicentennial Multicultural Foundation was established to promote a strong commitment to Australia as one people drawn from many cultures. The Roundtable is an Australia-wide organisation which consists of 40 members and covers all major producers, distributors and consumer groups of alternative format materials. The National Library of Australia and State Libraries are also members.

The Roundtable set up a working party to address the growing needs of print disabled people of non-English speaking background. Findings showed that the demands for material in the spoken word far outweighed the existing supply. Further research identified an urgent need for current affairs material. Statistics showed that Greek and Italian communities are the groups with the largest aged population with a print disability.

The talking newspaper will be produced in



The Prime Minister, Bob Hawke; Jim Bain, President of the Library Council of NSW; Alison Crook, State Librarian, State Library of NSW.

the Italian language in the Royal Blind Society's Student and Special Transcription Studios. Submasters will be airmailed to a counterpart agency in each State. Copies will be produced in all centres for distribution through libraries (Annual subscription is \$25 for 26 issues) to blind and print handicapped readers.

The contribution of the State Library of NSW to the project was the research by the

Multicultural Consultant into the needs of non-English speakers with print disabilities. The State Library's commitment to services to users with special needs and also to people from non-English speaking backgrounds is highlighted in this project which combines both commitments.

The Prime Minister also found time in his busy schedule to visit the Special Needs Centre at the library.

Jill Cavenagh
State Library of NSW

In Brief

Grants announced

The Literature Board of the Australia Council has just announced its annual grants to assist Australian creative writers.

This year 100 writers (out of 585 applicants) were awarded grants—a 17 per cent success rate.

Funds allocated totalled \$1.7 million. Although the Literature Board had not received any real increase in its budget for this year, the Board had agreed that Fellowship rates should be increased by \$1000 per annum for 1992.

Among the successful applicants this year, well known names included Humphrey McQueen, Drusilla Modjeska, Brian Castro and Jenny Wagner. Non-English-speaking background writers received 22 per cent of available funds—a significant increase over last year.

Public Lending Right Warren Horton appointed new chair

The Minister for the Arts, Tourism and Territories, David Simmons, today announced the appointment of Warren Horton, Director-General of the NLA, to the position of Chair of the Public Lending Right Committee for a 4-year term from September 1991. The Public Lending Right Scheme assists Australian writers and publishers by compensating them for the free use of their books in public libraries.

Warren has been a staunch advocate of the Public Lending Right Scheme for many years. He replaces Harrison Bryan, also a former Director-General of the National Library. Harrison Bryan served as Chair of the PLR Committee for 6 years. During Harrison's term the Public Lending Right Act 1985 took effect, giving the PLR Scheme a statutory base.

New database on OZLINE

A new database, DRUG, has been mounted on the OZLINE network. It is produced by the Australian Council of Alcohol and other Drug Associations (ACADA) and mainly holds references to drug and alcohol material kept in the ACADA library. The subject coverage includes the political, social, economic, psychological and legal elements of prevention and treatment of alcohol and other drug abuse. Both legal and illegal drugs are included. A subfile of the DRUG database consists of nearly 1000 references to Australian research projects in this subject area.

The database consists of 12 000 records increasing by about 200 records monthly.

Contact OZLINE, National Library of Australia, Canberra, ACT 2600 for information about the network, costs, communications, the databases etc., or telephone (008) 02 0002.