Warwick Cathro

1991 Robert D Williamson Award winner

THE WINNER of the Robert D Williamson Award for 1991 is Warwick Cathro, Director, Network Services, at the National Library of Australia.

Warwick was presented with his award at the VALA Conference Dinner held on 12 November 1991 at the Hilton on the Park Hotel, Melbourne. The presentation was made by Enid Williamson, the widow of Robert D Williamson who was a pioneer in the development of information science and library automation in Australia and in whose memory the award was established.

The citation praised the outstanding contribution made by Warwick to the development of the Australian Bibliographic Network.

Under his leadership ABN has grown in spectacular fashion and has become an undisputed success, not merely as a national shared cataloguing network but as a focus of inter-library cooperation and as a source of technical and political strength for Australian libraries. Major enhancements to ABN were developed and introduced. These include Downline Loading, ABN Supersearch and the Interlibrary Loans module, which resulted in a greatly increased range of services available to ABN users. Simultaneously ABN's fee structures were substantially revised to recognise more fully the contribution made by participating libraries, and to place ABN on a firm financial footing.
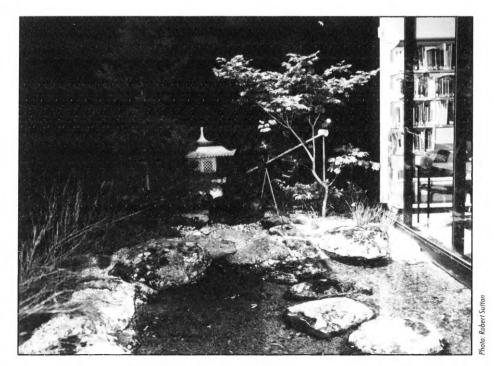
In 1988, arising out of an examination of the future of the ABN system and its possible redevelopment on a modular basis, Warwick developed a new vision for ABN in the mid-1990s. This he promoted, debated, and refined in the next two years, through countless meetings, consultations and forums both inside and outside the National Library, culminating in the issuance of a comprehensive RFI for ABN Redevelopment.

The Robert D Williamson Award was first presented in 1981 and has been awarded annually since then, except in 1990. The Award recognises "outstanding contributions to the development of information science in Australia". Previous recipients have included Jim Gilmore, Neil Spiers, Ian McCallum, Des Tellis, Hans Zwillenberg, Sue Wannon, Sherrey Quinn, Elizabeth Swan and Jeff Leeuwenberg. The award was formerly made by a small group of individuals within the Information Science industry. In 1991 the Award was adopted by VALA, the Victorian Association for Library Automation and future recipients will be selected by the VALA Committee.

Thus the Robert D Williamson Award joins a series of other coveted awards made by VALA, including the VALA Award to libraries and other institutions who have demonstrated innovative use of information technology and the VALA Travel Scholarships.

Hans Groenewegen
Monash University

The recipient of the 1991 Robert D Williamson Award, Dr Warwick Cathro, flanked by Enid Williamson (left) and Helen Livingston, 1991 VALA President (right).

Unique library feature

Link with Japanese sister city

THE NEW Altona City Library complex was officially opened by the Mayor of the City of Altona, Cr Graham Hosken JP, on 22 October 1991.

A unique feature of the 1634 m^2 building is a Japanese garden located in the centre of the complex, with a traditional Japanese stone lantern. The lantern, hand-crafted in Japan, was a gift of the Japanese City of Anjo and was donated to mark the third anniversary of the Sister City Agreement between the cities of Altona and Anjo.

Present at the opening was the Mayor of the city of Anjo, Mr Masayuki Sugiuna and Mrs Sugiuna, along with a delegation from the city of Anjo.

The project cost $1.6 million and was undertaken by Burns Bridge Australia Pty Ltd; the architect was Mr Gary Marshall of Lines, MacFarlane and Marshall. It was completed $100 000 under budget.

The new library complex features an exhibition area, community meeting rooms, special projects office and a Friends of Altona Library meeting area. Further details may be obtained from the City Librarian, Daniel Ferguson, Phone (03) 398 2255; Fax (03) 398 2553.

Photo: Robert Sutton

A corner of the Japanese garden in the new Altona City Library.