

New library building for James Cook

John McKinlay looks confidently to the future

IT USED TO BE said that the essential elements of a library service were the three Bs—Books, Brains and Buildings.

When I came to James Cook University in 1983, as University Librarian, it could have been said that two of these necessary conditions were met. We had a good book (and journal) collection, which owed much to the diligent efforts of my predecessor, Chris Hunt. Since then, with the continuing support of the University, the book collection has grown and flourished.

We also had good brains—the staff who are essential to operate and to manage the library's services. Thankfully, we have continued to attract, to retain and to develop and excellent staff, for which the University should be grateful.

We also had an excellent building, designed by James Birrell in the 1960's, but one which was desperately over-crowded, over-utilised and over-strained by the development of the University. Happily, after an extended delay but with the unflinching support of the University, the extension of the University's Main Library building was approved by the then Minister for Employment, Education and Training in 1988.

With the creative skills of the architect, Bob Clayton, the diligence of the contractors, Holland-Stolte, the support and

involvement of the Library staff, and the entirely undeserved patience and cooperation of the University's staff and students, the Main Library building was transformed during 1990. We now

added Cs—Computers, Communications and Commitment. And we do have all of these. But the 4,700 users who crowd through the building on a typical semester day still need a



have a building, almost twice its original size, of which the University can be proud once again, and which will serve its needs and aspirations well for many years. In the 1990s in higher education libraries, books, brains and buildings may not be enough.

As we move towards the electronic library, we need banks of micro-computers, automated systems, access to local and international computer networks, and a range of sophisticated skills and technology.

The new dogmas are the three

welcoming and friendly environment in which they can study, explore and develop.

Libraries are the catalyst for real, personal, learning. It is a great pleasure to have been associated with the transformation of the Main Library building. Like libraries in general, the extension has built upon the past, enhancing and enriching it but not cloaking or rejecting it. The extension is both true to its origins, and also a symbol of the future. May it serve well its future generations of users. ■

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