

# Alison Crook Business Woman of the Year

**Transforming the State Library of NSW into an outward-looking, entrepreneurial, technology-driven organisation**

**A**LISON Crook is not only the Bulletin/Qantas Business Woman of the Year—she is also the first public servant and the first librarian ever to have won this coveted award. The Bulletin comments (27 October 1992, pp 28-30): 'Since becoming the State Librarian and Director of NSW Library Services and the State Library of NSW in 1987, 45-year-old Crook has revolutionised the institution. When she arrived in the early eighties, there were just two electronic typewriters in the building. Today, the library can tap into the information networks of the world.'

As the Bulletin's headline put it: 'She is not so much dragging Australia's oldest institution of its type into the 20th Century as steering it deftly into the next.' A UNSW study by Stace and Dunphy has examined how 'this 166-year-old library has become a successful, thriving, dynamic organisation and leading player in the information industry.' Their conclusion: Alison Crook brought a new vision of the library as an outward-looking, entrepreneurial, technology-driven organisation. Around a joint philosophy of public access and user pays, the staff have created a new client-focused, service oriented organisation.

The library has a staff of 440 and a budget of \$35 million, of which \$15 million goes to public library grants. The remaining \$20 million is not enough—the library takes \$24 million to run. To make up the shortfall, Alison has introduced some new measures:

- a foundation has raised nearly half



*Annita Keating presents the award to Alison Crook at a luncheon on 20 October*

its capital target of \$10 million in five years;

- support is given by nearly 200 volunteers;
- a number of small joint venture businesses set up within the library, such as Elizabeth Swan's 'Information Edge' business information service, employ 45 staff and provide 20% of total funding;
- the library hires out its function areas;
- it markets its own publications, prints, cards and videodiscs;
- it even offers a public conservation service for old books, photographs and letters;
- and there are the ILANET,

building consultancy, training and the Image Library services all making their contribution.

In among all this activity, Alison is also a Director of Lend Lease corporate financial services and a member of the Australian Institute of Management. She has just begun her second five-year term as State Librarian, but is already looking ahead to broader fields within the next ten years.

ALIA has already recognised Alison's quality by awarding her "Library Manager of the Year" in 1988. Now we congratulate Alison on her remarkable achievements and wish her every success in her coming term. ■

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