

Quality in the tropics

Interest and awareness in quality issues and libraries is a hot topic across the nation, no less so in the tropics. These issues were examined and debated in Townsville recently during the *Quest for quality* day organised by the ALIA North Queensland Division.

Excellent presenters, a stimulating and thought-provoking workshop session and a delightful venue ensured the day was a success. The program included presentations on the principles of quality assurance and total quality management, practical applications of continuous improvement in a service

industry and quality management initiatives in library services.

While the speakers deliberately avoided promoting a particular brand of quality, some common principles emerged:

- Understand and exceed customer expectations.
- Record and measure processes and make decisions based on hard data.
- Focus on continuous improvement.
- Involve and develop staff.

Brainstorming workshops led by QUT University Librarian Gaynor Austen focused on these principles. Participants discussed customer feedback

mechanisms, improving the processing of functions such as acquisitions or interlibrary lending using statistical measures, and the means to involve staff in these endeavours. As participants represented all library sectors, there was much useful exchange of strategies during the day.

Innovative ideas developed in a workshop situation and the opportunity for informal networking, encouraged by wonderful views across sparkling Cleveland Bay to tropical Magnetic Island, ensured a very successful continuing education activity for the north. ■

Try a taste of the real Germany

Goethe-Institut — Guten Tag! This is the welcome you receive on calling the Goethe-Institut, the German cultural centres in Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra.

The Institute, a worldwide organisation with over 161 centres in 76 countries, was founded in 1951 to promote a wider knowledge of the German language abroad and to foster cultural co-operation with other countries. It is a German federally-funded, non-profit organisation with headquarters in Munich.

Generally the Goethe-Institut consists of three departments: language, cultural and library.

The language department holds language courses and assists German teachers with new material and information; the cultural department supports projects related to Germany, such as theatre productions, lectures, and contemporary music workshops; and the third area offers a library and information service.

The libraries have a wide range of books, magazines, cassettes, CDs and videos. About 25 per cent of the books are English translations or books by English authors about Germany.

As the institute is named after Goethe, the famous German poet, a lot of people assume we only stock literature in our library.

But the books cover topics such as philosophy, art, history and sociology, as well as German cookbooks,

children's books and books about Neuschwanstein and the Oktoberfest.

Recent newspapers arrive by air-mail from Germany along with magazines as varied as the popular German magazine *Stern*; a German equivalent to *Time* magazine called *Spiegel*; and *Kinder*, an easy-reader magazine for children.

The libraries are open to the public and are free of charge. A small one-off fee is applicable for the media library and, for people who live outside of the metropolitan area, a postal service is available.

The Goethe-Institut aims at helping Australians either wanting to learn German or who want information about Germany.

Until recently, the Institut was often the only source of material in German for university students. Many are pleased to have a break from their academic books to experience a taste of 'real Germany' with the latest pop music, a German movie without subtitles, or German magazines and comics.

German teachers also find the library a good source of up-to-date material for their students. The library can also assist with general enquiries about Germany: be it the address of a German television station; when the Bauhaus moved to Dessau; the title of the latest book by Martin Walser; or the words of *Lili Marlen*.

The libraries receive all their

books and materials directly from Germany. To order books the librarians use special lists issued by the headquarters in Munich which processes the orders and distributes them along with the books and the catalogue data on disk.

The cataloguing system in the Goethe-Institut libraries is co-ordinated worldwide. In 1990 it was decided to implement a computer-based cataloguing program developed by Braunschweig University instead of the programs of the individual countries.

This facilitates the transfer of information between Goethe-Institut libraries and makes it easier for the librarians, who are transferred from country to country. As this system makes it more difficult to exchange information with local libraries, lists of book titles are available.

It is one the Institute's aims to be part of the library system in Australia, so it is always keen to make contact with other libraries. Please do not hesitate to give the librarian a call either with a particular query or just to make contact:

Goethe-Institut Melbourne (for Vic, Tas, SA & WA), Attn: Brigitte Doellgast, Regional Librarian, 606 St Kilda Road, Melbourne, Vic 3004, ph (03) 510 3214, fax (03) 521 2912.

Goethe-Institut Sydney (for NSW, Qld & NT), Attn: Eva Hermann, 90 Ocean Street, Woollahra, NSW 2025, ph (02) 328 7411, fax (02) 326 1323.

Goethe-Institut Canberra, Attn: Gudruna Papak, 40 Allara Street, PO Box 186, Civic Square, ACT 2601, ph (06) 247 4472, fax (06) 257 6503. ■