

## Wet wet wet...

That was the Wellington weather — not the conference program. Nor was the program dry. The program committee managed to achieve a balance of papers by our colleagues on current issues such as CIR (closer information relations between Australia and New Zealand), information justice, indigenous issues, co-operation, marketing, information technology, industrial relations developments, and stimulating views from some non-librarians.

Moana Maniapoto-Jackson, lawyer, actor, talk-back host, singer and Maori activist, who freely admitted she avoided the library during her studies, gave a stunning delivery on the state of biculturalism in NZ, how the situation could be improved and how Australia might learn from the NZ experience. Our own Brian Toohey, noted political commentator and civil libertarian, highlighted some disturbing trends in Australian society and what librarians might do about them. David Lange, NZ national treasure, enthralled the large turn-up at the closing session with a most entertaining and witty presentation on information and power. Spiced with his personal recollections of growing up in NZ, as PM and of life since the heady days of office, he was even able to stage-manage his own standing ovation.

However, as everyone knows, a conference is more than papers. The trade exhibition was busy every day and excited great interest among delegates especially as there was a broad range of library services and materials on display. Should we care? We should because most of these exhibitors are strong supporters of the profession in both countries.

The conference provided the opportunity to catch up with colleagues, some of whom we haven't seen since last conference and also to make new friends especially with the locals. Kiwi hospitality was warm, the restaurants excellent and the wine better than expected.

How can Melbourne improve on this in 1996? In two ways — no 8.30am starts and better weather!

*Bruce Davidson*



*Virginia Walsh and Gordon Bower discussing the conference at the ALIA stand*

## The President's highlights

The conference session that I most enjoyed, and one that I felt illustrated best practice in both Australia and New Zealand, was the session on information technology. John Shipp from the University of Wollongong served as an interesting and amusing chairman, and he set the scene for the session by stating that the speakers would provide an overview of IT and networking in their sector. Jim Cleary, University of Newcastle, gave an overview from the perspective of higher education and their libraries; Richard Naylor, a consultant in the IT Department of the Wellington (NZ) City Council spoke on various aspects of the public access system, CITY NET, the most advanced community network in either country; Nola Hambleton, a school principal from Dunedin spoke on the use of IT and

networks in schools in New Zealand; and Stuart Fist, an Australian freelance journalist, a regular contributor to *Australian communications* and the *Australian*, dealt with a lot of technical issues in everyday language but also gave a refreshingly candid view on policy and particularly on pricing issues. These speakers were well chosen and illustrated the relative sectorial strengths of the two countries.

The other, almost equal highlight of the conference, was discovering the Backbenchers Bar and The Malthouse, both relatively close to the conference site and both excellent venues for fine ale, wine and social networking. They were equal to any of my discoveries in the last thirteen LAA/ALIA conferences that I have attended — may there be many more!

*Bill Linklater*



*(l to r) Andy Smithies, John Levett, Julie Young, Mark Carpenter and Carolyn Cherrett at the conference registration area in the Michael Fowler Centre*