

Creating libraries with a new attitude

Cross-cultural awareness training for library staff

Ronald Briggs and Melissa Jackson, Aboriginal Liaison librarians, State Library of New South Wales

Historically there has always been a lack of Aboriginal involvement in the library system. Increased usage by Aboriginal clients and the proliferation of Aboriginal related information resources has seen a dire need for librarians to understand Aboriginal culture and client needs. Increasingly there were calls from our colleagues with requests such as: 'How do I get Kooris into the library?' 'What sort of materials should I be collecting?' 'How do I develop an appropriate local history collection that includes Aboriginal perspectives?' 'My staff are not used to dealing with Aboriginal people — What can I do?'.

These are quite valid concerns and are indicative of a genuine need from within the library community to understand indigenous cultures. During 1994 (the year of the World's Indigenous Peoples) the Public Libraries Branch of the State Library of New South Wales

recruited our help in educating NSW library staff and equipping them with skills for cross-cultural communication. We incorporated the work of Dalton Morgan and Associates from South Australia (who had already worked extensively in the area) to facilitate our training. This resulted in the development of a one and a half day Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander awareness program.

The cross-cultural awareness training and information program aims to develop awareness within the framework of anti-racist thinking. The program is intended as a basic or introductory course which introduces and explores three major areas:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, cultures and people;
- non-indigenous attitudes towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and how they are formed; and

- cross-cultural behaviour and actions (and how they affect library operations).

The program differs from other programs in as much as it explores attitudes and how they are formed. It is essentially aimed at sensitising participants to the complex nature of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and how they are viewed by non-indigenous people — in turn developing a greater awareness and understanding of those cultures and how they operate.

The program is neither an exercise in political-correctness nor confrontational, but a realistic and honest look at Aboriginal people and cultures. People get out of it what they put in and to date we have had an extremely encouraging percentage of participants who have had their perceptions of indigenous cultures and the nature of racism altered.

In the end we all hope for libraries with new attitudes. ■

18/12(AGM). Contact: Brenda Simpson, Ph: (07) 3403 8621.

• **19/6 QLD public libraries section.** *Effective Presentations.* 6pm for 6.30pm, members \$10, others \$15. Central City Library Theatre, City Plaza, Cnr Ann, George and Adelaide Sts, Brisbane. Bring a friend to be in the draw for a great prize! Contact: Del Simpson Ph: (07) 3403 9511 (w), e-mail: simpson@gil.com.au.

20/6 **ACLIS (QLD) Acquisitions subcommittee.** *Hyperlinked and hyperactive?* Serials acquisitions of the future. Seminar to be held 8.30-4pm, Conference Room, Public Libraries Division, Brisbane. Enquires and registration contact: Kate Kelly (07) 5595 1535.

25-27/6 **Insearch/Knight-Ridder Information Seminars.** Introductory DIALOG (25/7), DataStar ProBase (26/6 am), Business (27/6). Brisbane contact: (02) 212 2867.

• **18/7 Qld specials section.** *Career Planning Workshop for Librarians.* V-M Group Training, 62 Astor Terrace, Spring Hill. Time: 9-5pm. Cost: \$90 includes lunch and morning/afternoon tea. Limit of 16 participants. Contact: Svea Sakellariou, Ph: (07) 3237 9440 by 4 July.

• **25/7 Qld specials section.** *Career Planning Workshop for Library Technicians.* V-M Group Training, 62 Astor Terrace, Spring Hill. Time: 9-5pm. Cost: \$90 includes lunch and morning/afternoon tea. Limit of 16 participants. Contact: Svea Sakellariou, Ph: (07) 3237 9440 by Thurs 4 July.

• **21/8 QLD public libraries section.** *Outsourcing and competitive tendering.* 6.00pm for 6.30pm, members \$10, others \$15. Central City Library Theatre, City Plaza, Cnr Ann, George and Adelaide Sts, Brisbane. Contact: Del Simpson Ph: (07) 3403 9511 (b/h), e-mail: simpson@gil.com.au.

• **16/10 QLD public libraries section.** *Library users with special needs.* 6.00pm for 6.30pm, members \$10, others \$15. Central City Library Theatre, City Plaza, Cnr Ann, George and Adelaide Sts, Brisbane. Contact: Del Simpson Ph: (07) 3403 9511 (b/h), e-mail: simpson@gil.com.au.

• **18/12 QLD public libraries section.** *The great debate: censorship on the net.* 6.00pm for 6.30pm, members \$10, others \$15. Central City Library Theatre, City Plaza, Cnr Ann, George and Adelaide Sts, Brisbane. Contact: Del Simpson Ph: (07) 3403 9511 (b/h), e-mail: simpson@gil.com.au.

SA

• **26/6 Join the information science section (SA) when they meet at Cyberscene Cafe, L1, 287 Rundle Street, Adelaide.** Surf the web from 5.30-6pm, informal speakers 6-7pm, then more surfing till 7.30pm. The cafe can only accommodate about 20 people, please register by contacting Val Green 302 3092; e-mail: valerie.green@unisa.edu.au.

TAS

17-20/6 **Insearch/Knight-Ridder Information Seminars.** DIALOG UPDATE-HOBART (17/6 am), Introductory DIALOG (18/6), Beyond the Ba-

continued next page...



Providing Busy Library Managers with

- Permanent staff placements
- Temporary staff placements
- Information Research
- Imagic support
- Library Management

INTO Information Resources & LibraryStaff by Zenith

SYDNEY: Telephone 02 413 2555
Facsimile 02 413 1173
After hours 02 413 2555

What's On INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE GUIDE

- ♦ business topics
- ♦ coinciding sporting & cultural events

Catsa Publications

Tel: (07) 3356 7088

Fax: (07) 3356 7834

WWW: <http://www.catsa.com.au>

3/39 Elgin St, PO Box 634,
Alderley, Brisbane Qld 4051 Australia