



CSIRO DMST E-Beam Lab with Exelgram design studio in foreground

Principle of partnership

Philip Kent, CSIRO Corporate Information Management

Diversity and commonality are two words that summarise library and information services in CSIRO. Australia's national science and technology organisation is an enterprise that relies heavily on the transfer of knowledge and information. To facilitate this transfer CSIRO has more than fifty libraries and bookholding centres throughout Australia. They vary in size from our largest, Black Mountain Library in Canberra with more than ten staff, to small laboratories such as Helena Valley in Western Australia which has one part-time staff member. Remote locations pose additional problems but Ilma Lo Iacono, librarian at the Division of Horticulture in Merbein overcomes these through the sharing of resources and professional and technical support within CSIRO.

CSIRO Library and Information Centres vary in purpose. Many have embraced a broader role including responsibility for public enquiries and communication, business information, records management, divisional publications and information technology. A number provide commercial information services to private industry, often to companies with which CSIRO is collaborating.

Despite this diversity, CSIRO library and information centres are linked to form a network that has an underlying principle of partnership. According to a recent external reviewer of CSIRO's internal communication processes, the CSIRO Library Network: 'is the beginning of a matrix-structure which can be harnessed to provide significant energy for the whole organisation.'

The CSIRO Library Network Committee develops shared policies and the Network provides input to corporate systems through internal user groups. The automated library system, Voyager, is the delivery mechanism for the shared union catalogue. According to Liz Davy, librarian at CSIRO's Division of Atmospheric Research, the system is the glue that holds the network together. A practical outcome of the network approach is the sharing of resources.

Electronic delivery of information directly to the desktop of scientific staff is a high priority. In September 1994, the SIM system was implemented to deliver a variety

of internal and external databases, most notably Current Contents to all staff. Since that time, additional databases have been added, including full-text corporate manuals and a co-operative committee — the Information Access Group — is prioritising additional products and seeking funding for future projects.

CSIRO Corporate Information Management plays a co-ordination and service delivery role within the library network. User support for information management tools (World Wide Web, SIM and Voyager) is available in addition to library technical services, World Wide Web corporate image, archives and records management services and the CSIRO Index database. Corporate Information Management recently managed the tendering of CSIRO's \$6.5 million worth of serials publications. Central negotiation for the increasing number of external databases is a growing activity.

Many librarians will recall the former CSIRO Central Library from which Corporate Information Management evolved. The group recently relocated to the science and technology park adjacent to Monash University, Clayton. The move saw the end of eighty years at the East Melbourne site, where CSIRO and its predecessors were originally headquartered.

CSIRO libraries have always operated in a relatively-decentralised manner and devolution of the Central Library function over the past eight years has resulted in Corporate Information Management focusing more on developing the electronic delivery of information and managing components of the network that support the autonomy of divisional libraries.

CSIRO is not exempt from current trends in public sector management and the organisation is currently restructuring its research divisions. Research support activities are more than ever under scrutiny and this means that library and information centres will need to adapt and respond to the changing organisation with innovative service delivery. Recent successes in developing electronic services provides a good foundation for enhanced services to benefit science and Australia. ■

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