

Commercial focus needed by public libraries

Public libraries must become more market driven and commercially focused to cope with the increased demands for service into the 21st century, according to a report looking at service delivery options and funding models for public libraries, released in South Australia recently.

Flexible public library service models for the new century is the initiative of the Public Libraries Automated Information Network (PLAIN), a branch of the State Library of South Australia. The Libraries Board of South Australia commissioned the report, in co-operation with the Local government and Chief Librarians' Association of South Australia.

The report, researched by Adelaide-based consultants Hudson Howells Asia Pacific Consulting, was funded by the National Office of Local Government, with the Department of the Environment, Sport and Territories. An interactive kit, including the report will be sent to every public library in Australia, as part of the Federal funding arrangements that made the research possible.

The report encourages libraries to build on their enviable networking infrastructures for a marketing and service delivery advantage. It suggests that the public library tradition of trying to be all things to all people is not always going to be

a viable option and suggests service models that can meet client needs more efficiently.

The report urges public libraries to maximise their network of strategic partnerships to embrace joint-use libraries, particularly in the rural sectors, and wherever the viability of library funding is threatened. A key finding of the research is that libraries have a marketing advantage that they do not acknowledge or capitalise on. It suggests the development of a 'public library brand', used for umbrella marketing on a state-wide basis, as well as the development of individual marketing plans at each public library.

A suggestion likely to be considered controversial by the library professional community is for a common database of all library customers. Libraries are in the commercially enviable position of being able to track customer interest from both materials borrowed and information sourced electronically from computer terminals. This information can be used to develop a range of services tailored to the needs of its customer segments, according to the report.

The Public Libraries Automated Information Network is considering ways of helping librarians put the report into everyday practice. Workshops and seminars are follow-up options. ■

Australian Libraries: The Essential Directory 4th edition (ALED4)

Did we miss you?

If you are a

Public library	Academic library
Special library	Joint use library
Library supplier	Library consultant
Information broker	Association
Employment agency	Network
Consortium	Library school
Agency	Library science publisher

... and have not yet received your questionnaire for ALED4 please let us know!

Auslib Press
PO Box 622
Blackwood SA 5051
Telephone (08) 8278 4363 Fax (08) 8278 4000
auslib@mail.camtech.net.au



A U R O R A
LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
THREDBO 1997

was proudly sponsored by



Australian
Library and
Information
Association

The Aurora Leadership Institute is presented by
AIMA Training and Consultancy Services Limited
Telephone: (06) 262 1223 • Facsimile: (06) 257 1703
E-mail: aima@nla.gov.au