

# Focus on learning

Diana Harrison, convenor, National Working Group For Tafe Library Services

The National Working Group for TAFE Library Services is a forum which actively promotes the development of library and information services within the TAFE sector. It was formed in early 1987 with the brief, among other things, of providing advice on the development of TAFE libraries to the then Australian Conference of TAFE Directors. The Group is comprised of one representative from each state, and one from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research. The Group has no independent funding; each state contributes the costs for their representative.

One of the major contributions the Group has made over the last few years is the development of 'Focus on learning: a framework for the provision of learning resources library and information services in vocational education and training'. This was developed in response to the need for consistent planning mechanisms for TAFE libraries around Australia. Another major project is the publication of national TAFE library statistics, which until now have not been collected consistently. The National Working Group supports free interlibrary loans between TAFE libraries.

## The participants...

### Australian Capital Territory

Canberra Institute of Technology is a large multi-campus provider of over 250 courses on six campuses, and the library is a unit within the Education and Business Program. By the end of June 1997 the ACT government will have become provider of all information technology equipment and services, and the Institute the purchaser of these services. There are considerable implications in terms of service level agreements for library systems and services across six campuses.

Two campus libraries are currently integrating collections and services with new flexible course delivery methods. The first on-campus flexible learning centre will be at Reid and 1997 has seen the refurbishment of library facilities to include sixty-five new work stations, an assessment area for teachers, a new loans desk where students will enrol directly into modules or courses and an after-hours computing facility. Weston campus is part of the focal point for horticulture in the ACT and the new flexible learning facility due for completion this year will provide a holistic approach to learning facilities and resources.

### New South Wales

TAFE NSW delivers vocational education and training through its twelve institutes, eight Institutes of TAFE, three Institutes of Technology, and the Open Training and Education Network (OTEN). Although library service provision is the responsibility of each Institute, a number of co-operative and resource sharing arrangements con-

tinue to sustain a well-developed statewide network — all ninety-six institute libraries contribute to the shared database of over one million records, and a policy of statewide resource sharing allows TAFE NSW students and staff to borrow from any Institute library once they are a registered borrower.

OTEN is responsible for the provision of key central services, for example managing the purchasing, processing and distribution of new library resource materials for all Institute Libraries, providing system support and a user hotline for the NEW TAFE Online Library Information System, and co-ordinating the production of the NSW TAFE library CD-ROM catalogue.

### Northern Territory

The provision of TAFE library services in the Northern Territory is as diverse as the people and the communities they live in. The Territory has a small population of approximately 174 000 people with 40 000 of these being indigenous people, spread over a large area. There is no institution which offers just vocational education and training programmes; these programs are offered from multisectorial institutions.

The library collections and information services provided reflect the unique nature of the particular clients served. There are four main TAFE institutions; Northern Territory University with libraries at both Casuarina and Palmerston campuses; Batchelor College; Northern Territory Rural College located in Katherine and Centralian College in Alice Springs. There are a number of private providers including the Institute of Abo-

iginal Affairs (Alice Springs) and Nungalinga College (Darwin).

### Queensland

TAFE in Queensland has experienced many changes over the last few years, including the devolution to colleges of many of the functions once carried out by Head Office, the amalgamation of thirty-two colleges into sixteen institutes, the opening up of vocational education and training to competitive tendering by TAFE and private providers and the introduction of flexible delivery of courses.

Technical services once provided centrally by the TAFE Library Network Branch have been devolved to libraries. With the creation of institutes, libraries are faced with new structures and changes in policies and procedures to ensure consistency of service across multi-campus institutes. Less state-based funding each year for institutes is resulting in smaller library budgets. Collection development budgets have been cut and staffing levels have been reduced in many libraries.

The good news, however, is that a new library information management system is to be implemented in 1997; this system is Contec Data's C2. Access to the Internet is also soon to be provided across Queensland TAFE. The heartening aspect of these developments is the positive way in which library staff are dealing with these changes — TAFE Queensland library staff are not easily daunted.

### South Australia

Consistent with the 'purchaser/provider' model of training and other aspects of the training reform agenda, TAFE SA (the ten Institutes of TAFE in this state) has been

separated from other functions of the Department of Employment, Training and Further Education. TAFE SA is a co-operative entity, with benefits coming from Institutes working together, rather than competing with one another.

LEARN includes the staff of all learning resource centres of TAFE Institutes in South Australia. The LEARN network reports to the Learning Systems and Resources Standing Committee. The director of Adelaide Institute is chair of this standing committee and the convenor of the LEARN network sits on this committee. This enables the network to have ready access to the directors of TAFE SA.

The peak committee for LEARN, the LEARN Planning Group, has a representative from every Institute learning resource service on it. The planning group manages, monitors and co-ordinates developments across the network. This structure functions well at present and ensures that educational is-

ssues are kept before the peak management group of TAFE SA.

### Victoria

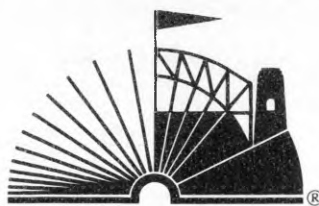
There are currently twenty-seven TAFE Institutes in Victoria; however the number will drop radically in the next few years under changes and mergers signalled by the Victorian Government. The Institutes have totally devolved management responsibilities, with staff employed by the Institute Councils. There are no institutionalised networks for librarians within the state training system; however twenty-five years ago the Victorian Association of TAFE College Librarians was established to act as an advocate for TAFE library services within the state, and as a professional support network. Each TAFE Library manager is a member of the Association, which has now become the Victorian Association of TAFE Institute Librarians, and provides expert advice, products and services to its members and clients.

### Western Australia

The *Vocational Education and Training Bill* came into effect in early 1997, the most significant aspect of which is the establishment of autonomous colleges. This has resulted in devolution of all head office functions to the colleges. Responsibility for the libraries automated system (Dynix) and the functions of the Central Cataloguing Unit now rest with the colleges, and librarians are having to incorporate these functions into existing library services.

All colleges have undertaken major reviews of their library service, resulting in different recommendations that reflect the requirements of each college. This climate of change and challenge will exist for the foreseeable future, with TAFE libraries having to re-evaluate what they do and how they do it. One of the major challenges will be to maintain an element of co-operation between libraries in this new competitive environment. ■

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