

New library the hub of campus

Rose Humphries, Prahran Campus Library

A history spanning over eighty years is the proud heritage of the Prahran Campus of Swinburne University of Technology. Commencing as the Prahran Technical Art School in 1915, the institution is now in its sixth metamorphosis, having weathered name changes — and policies — as Prahran Technical School, Prahran College of Technology, Prahran CAE, Prahran College of TAFE/Victoria College and its final change — to date — in 1992 as Swinburne University of Technology. The old 1915 building housed a library which in the seventies expanded onto two levels. There was more space, but no lift, a rabbit warren of passages, partitions, dull colour schemes, and — towards the end — a leaky roof and borer ridden floor. Bliss for the campus staff and for the 4500 TAFE and 450 Higher Education students when we moved into a brand new building in July 1996.

The new library, complete with 'people lift', occupies about half of the first and second levels of a new TAFE funded, five storey building. Grouped together with the cafeteria (ground floor) and student services and student union (second floor), this area has become the hub of the campus. Above us the School of Social Sciences and Arts, the largest school on campus, occupies the top three floors. The library, designed by Melbourne architect Peter Bickle, is light, bright and very colourful. It also functions well. The friendly and comfortable atmosphere created by the design is matched by accommodation for print materials, expanding information technology, a variety of study spaces and good staff facilities.

Our high-volume print and audio visual material loans — 104 000 in 1996 — convinced us that a wholesale conversion into an electronic library to the detriment of physical materials was not what our users wanted. Nevertheless we recognised that increased access to information technology was still high on the agenda for a library looking into the 21st Century. We therefore provided extensive network cabling throughout the library. This supports a

bank of computers for networked databases, Internet, stand-alone CD-ROM packages and interactive computer-based training programs; fifteen large networked carrels for students to connect using their own laptop computers; and a separate multimedia self-access laboratory adjacent to the library for student use.

Other significant features of the new library are: group discussion/meeting rooms; state-of-the-art user education room equipped with video projector; separate photocopy room; media services workroom adjacent to the loans area; and greatly improved staff facilities.

On the negative side, there is little room for growth of the print collections so weeding will be a high priority each year.

The most significant change is due to the greatly increased access to information technology for students. Reference librarians have embarked on a steep learning curve as they deal with many more general computer enquiries ('I can't find my file', 'how do I send an e-mail?'). A lot of our students need basic computing support and are demanding this from library staff. We have provided CD-ROM-based interactive training programs on the popular applications, frequently asked questions sheets, and we are considering running short courses based on the 'most frequently asked questions' on computer problems in 1998. We are also handling many more complaints and suggestions. The new facilities seem to have heightened expectations and the students are quite vociferous in their demands. A lot of the feedback relates to the computer facilities — especially the printers!

A more pleasing aspect — from the point of view of our popularity and our more traditional services — is that all quantifiable services (loans, inter-campus loans, and reference enquiries) have risen significantly since we've been in the new building. This seems to be an endorsement of what we all hoped would be a huge improvement for the learning experience of our students.



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2-29/7 Insearch/Knight-Ridder Information Seminars. Introductory DIALOG (2/7), Business (29/7). Sydney contact: (02) 9212 2867, krinfo.uts.edu.au.

• **10/7 NSW Special Libraries section committee meeting.** AMP Society Library, Level 6, 33 Alfred Street, Sydney. Visitors are welcome. (10/7). Contact: Moya Lum, ph (02) 9257 5481, fax (02) 9257 7756, moya_lum@amp.com.au.

• **15/7-5/11 ALIA NSW Schools section committee meeting dates.** Leichhardt Primary School, Joint Council Rooms. 7pm. (15/7; 6/8; 8/9; 14/10; 5/11). Contact: Andrew Barber, ph (02) 9519 1544, fax (02) 9519 1657.

• **16/7 NSW TAFE section.** A high-quality evening with John Carnegie, or, why change management fails. Venue: The Tea Shop, 70-74 Philip Street, Parramatta. Time: 6.30pm for 7pm. Cost: \$32 members. Contact: Charmaine Caskey, Sydney Institute of Technology Library, phone (02) 9217 3205, fax (02) 9217 4020, charmaine.caskey@tafensw.edu.au. Please advise any special dietary requirement.

21/7 Exploring and navigating the Internet. UNSW, School of Information, Library and Archive Studies. Contact: Maureen Henninger, ph (02) 9385 3589, fax (02) 9385 3430, e-mail M.Henninger@unsw.edu.au.

• **23/7 NSW Special Libraries section.** Maria Gemenis award dinner. Hyde Park Plaza Hotel, 38 College Street, Sydney. 6pm for 6.30pm, \$40 Specials, \$45 ALIA, \$50 non-members. Prepayment essential. Cheques payable to ALIA NSW Special Libraries section, PO Box R689, Royal Exchange 1225. RSVP by 11/7 to Sharron Stapleton, ph (02) 9746 4749.

29/7 Doing research on the Net. UNSW, School of Information, Library and Archive Studies. Contact: Maureen Henninger, ph (02) 9385 3589, fax (02) 9385 3430, e-mail M.Henninger@unsw.edu.au.

29/7-26/8 Tuesday evenings, Introduction to OASIS. UNSW, School of Information, Library and Archive Studies. Contact: Maureen Henninger, ph (02) 9385 3589, fax (02) 9385 3430, e-mail M.Henninger@unsw.edu.au.

• **30/7 NSW Information Science section.** Seminar on Metadata. State Library of NSW, Metcalfe Theatre. 9.30-5pm, \$110 ALIA members, \$130 non-members. Contact: Wael Foda, ACMS, ph (02) 9332 4622, fax (02) 9332 4066.

6-25/8 Insearch/Knight-Ridder Information Seminars. Introductory DIALOG (6/8), Beyond the Basics (25/8). Sydney contact: (02) 9212 2867, krinfo.uts.edu.au.

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