



Above: (l-r) The conference committee and editor of Dewey Decimal Classification: Christina Rowe, John Maguire, Prue Deacon, Joan Mitchell (DDC editor), Mary Mortimer, Cheryl Bowman and Judy Churches

New opportunities for cataloguers

Mary Mortimer, for the 12th National Cataloguing Conference committee

I found the conference a chance to be inspired; to learn something of what there is to learn; to begin to understand how a profession goes about its business and to make a goodly number of friends. The workshop format allowed an unprecedented opportunity for all to be involved and share and learn from others peoples real world experience and solutions.' This was the response of Canberra student James Stoney, one of the 230 participants in the 12th National Cataloguing conference in Canberra on 11 and 12 September, confronting the theme *New opportunities for cataloguers*.

And participate they did! Discussion was lively in all the workshops — Human resource management in cataloguing; Career strategies for cataloguers; Cataloguing standards: can we afford them?; the International Conference on the Principles and Future Developments of AACR; and Cataloguing skills for electronic documents — not to mention the sessions on innovations, classification and networking, and the tea-breaks in the brilliant Canberra Spring sunshine.

Joan Mitchell, the editor of *Dewey Decimal Classification*, set the tone in her opening address, when she ex-

plored the future of library classification schemes, and asked why those gurus organising information on the Internet should not adopt the systems librarians have been honing for decades, rather than re-inventing the wheel. After two days of discussion, Brenda McConchie closed the conference by challenging us to seize our opportunities to become as essential to the organisation and provision of information in the new era as we have been in traditional libraries.

For Jane Orbell, a student from Central Australia, 'the main themes that kept recurring throughout the conference were the issues of outsourcing, multi-skilling for cataloguers and alternative employment opportunities, the on-going issue of demarcation of duties between professional, non-professional, and para-professional staff, and the importance of promoting the skills of cataloguers and the value of cataloguing (particularly in this age of information proliferation through electronic sources).'

Maryanne Ferguson, from the University of South Australia, wrote that she 'became more aware of the impact of technology and changing work practices on the library profession; the fear and anxiety currently experienced by

many cataloguers in their rapidly changing workplaces; the opportunities for cataloguers to use their analytical skill outside the traditional library environment; the richness of indexing and abstracting skills which cataloguers have to offer to the world of the Internet, and the increasing difficulties experienced by libraries as the demand for access and integration of electronic documents into collections continues to grow.'

And Sally Diblasio was challenged by the changing role of the traditional cataloguer (who will now have to be more multi-skilled); the need to modify the rules, with greater acknowledgment of access points and keywords (is the 'Super Record' the answer?); and 'the mysteries and uncertainties of the Internet and how libraries of the future are going to handle the information that now exists'.

These students, who won free places at the conference, were stimulated by their experience, and we by their participation. As we all look forward to cataloguing in the next century, we know that, as one participant remarked in the final session, many of the questions for the library profession may sound familiar, but the answers are bound to be different! ■