

Women's interests

Doug George, Library and Information Service of Western Australia

The Library and Information Service of Western Australia (LISWA) was invited by the Women's Policy Development Office to participate in the Government's 'Two-year plan for women', specifically in the category of 'Women and decision making'.

LISWA participated with other in-

terest groups in a number of workshops to develop broad ranging initiatives for the period 1996-1998. LISWA committed to the following objectives:

- increase women's access to local, state and international information by making available the Infolink Database on the internet. The

Infolink: Government and Community Information Database provides access to information and services relating to women. This was launched in February 1997;

- improve women's access to information from government agencies and community organisations by gathering and presenting relevant information and investigating ways by which the information may be made more readily accessible to women.

Women's access to information from government agencies and community organisations was achieved by entering a selection of materials from the Women's Policy Development Office onto a database together with relevant LISWA titles.

When the Western Australian Government's Women's Policy Development Office (WPDO) underwent a re-alignment process, it led them to re-assess their information needs and their information role in the wider community. This included an evaluation of the library collection and the information it provided. WPDO reached the conclusion that it needed information services and an information professional. However, while the library collection was of historical significance, it was no longer relevant to the new focus of the agency.

Recognising its value and the importance of making it accessible to women, WPDO approached LISWA with the proposal that the State Reference Library house this historical collection. LISWA was seen as being the option which offered both optimum access and the capacity to support a long term commitment to the collection.

The collection has now become part of the Social Sciences Library where it complements those contemporary and historical works already collected. The collection has been catalogued and is available on the internet at <http://www/liswa.wa.gov.au>.

A select *Bibliography of women's interests*, based on both the former WPDO collection and that of the State Reference Library is in the process of being finalised and plans are underway to make it available in hardcopy and on the internet. ■

Special needs in Tasmania

Bridget Hutton, State Library of Tasmania

The overarching objective of the State Library of Tasmania is to provide statewide library and information services that meet the information, education, social and recreational reading needs of the Tasmanian community. The State Library of Tasmania provides library and information services for customers with special needs including people with disabilities, the homebound, people for whom English is a second language and the locationally disadvantaged.

Services to people with special needs includes the ongoing maintenance of special lending collections of recorded books, subtitled videos, large print books and books in a wide range of languages other than English. The needs of homebound patrons are met through a home delivery service where staff select materials for customers and volunteer couriers deliver the materials directly to the homebound customers.

Through the recent installation of Zoomtext software which enlarges text on the screen, print disabled customers have access to the Tasmanian Automated Library and Information System (TALIS) and associated services such as the Tasmanian Index, the University of Tasmania's catalogue and to the internet. All city libraries have a viewpoint scanner which magnifies text for the print disabled.

A number of library staff have attended courses on providing services to customers with special needs. The sessions were developed with input from members of the Tasmanian Advisory Committee on Library Services to People with Disabilities.

The State Library's *Tasmania Online* provided the facility to enable community groups to create sites on the Web. Hear-A-Book Inc, a Tasmanian producer of recorded books, is one organisation with an interest in services to people with disabilities to take advantage of this opportunity.

Tasmanian Communities Online is another new service, managed by the State Library, which is assisting locationally disadvantaged customers and their communities. The network of technology centres around the state will be rolled out over the next two years and supported by the community. The network complements the services of the library. The centres provide computers, printers, scanners and software as well as staffing and training courses to assist communities to navigate the internet and to create their own web pages. In addition, the centres will provide access to electronic government and community information. It is anticipated that many centres will establish partnerships with schools or libraries to maximise the community's use of existing government facilities. The centres will give communities the opportunity to showcase their heritage, cultural life and services.

The State Library of Tasmania owns a substantial Languages Other Than English (LOTE) collection. Recently the State Library conducted a survey of the reading habits and needs of LOTE customers with a view to improving access to the collection and other service aspects. ■