

• **11/2 ACT Branch Council meeting** with ACLIS ACT representatives. 5.30pm, National Library of Australia 4th Floor Conference Room. Contact: Libby Coates, 6266 2346, libby.coates@alianet.alia.org.au.

• **17/2 ACT Library Technicians meeting** *What's for 1998?* 5.30–7pm, CIT Reid, D Block (notice on main door). Meet the new committee. All welcome. Margaret Drury, president mdrury@agso.gov.au, Marion Boyd, vice-president ph 6270 6912, fx 6273 2110, mboyd@hcourt.gov.au.

• **19/2 ACT Specials** *Science Librarians' get-together lunch*. 12.15pm. Great Wall Chinese Restaurant, 13 Marcus Clarke Street, Canberra City. Cost: \$12. Contacts: Roxanne Missingham 6242 1659, r.missingham@dwe.csiro.au or Jeanette Regan 6249 0226, library@mso.anu.edu.au.

• **11/3 ALIA ACT/ACLIS ACT joint general meeting** *Information sharing and gathering*. 5.30pm. National Library of Australia, 4th Floor Conference Room. Contact: Libby Coates, 6266 2346, libby.coates@alianet.alia.org.au.

• **29/4 Canberra Online Users Group**. 12.15 for 12.30pm. The Midas Lunch, at University House, ANU. Sandra Oxley from INFORMIT will talk about RMIT's work with databases held centrally on CD-ROMS. A buffet, cost to be advised. RSVP: Margaret Hyland 6205 8217 or Joanne Hooper 0417 298 167.

NSW

• **6/2 NSW Special Libraries section** *Tour of the Opera Centre of Opera Australia*. 480 Elizabeth Street, Surrey Hills. 11–12pm, \$20 (includes lunch). Contact: Marianne Shepherd, 85 Moore Street, Leichhardt 2040, ph 0411 372 929, fx 02 9568 3271, sydney@cox.com.au (put Marianne's name in subject). RSVP with payment to: ALIA NSW Special Libraries section by 9/1, numbers limited.

• **17/2 NSW Branch AGM and launch of NSW mentoring program**. By ALIA president John Shipp. McDonalds Room (behind Metcalfe Auditorium), State Library of NSW. All members welcome. RSVP: Joanne Fuller 02 9906 6000, jojo1@ozemail.com.au.

• **20/2 NSW Branch ALIA/ACLIS meeting** *'Shaping a professional association to meet our needs'*. Guest speaker Derek Whitehead. 1:30 for 2pm. Sumitomo Room 3, Level 11, State Library of NSW. RSVP: Joanne Fuller 02 9906 6000, jojo1@ozemail.com.au.

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Librarians must market information literacy skills

Colette Ormonde, ALIA

Librarians will have to acquire marketing skills to keep their competitive edge, as more Australians realise that information literacy is a key competency for survival in the 21st century. Independent researcher Barbara Lepani, and Hannelore Rader from the United States of America made this point at the *Information literacy — the professional issue* conference, held in Canberra on 8 and 9 December 1997. More than seventy people attended the conference, organised by the University of South Australia Library, in association with the ALIA Information Literacy Taskforce. Participants came from New Zealand, the United States of America, South Africa, Singapore and Australia, drawn from the nursing, education, information technology and library professions, and from academia.

All speakers emphasised the need for lifelong learning and the necessity for information literacy to support continuing education and development.

Essential library role

The Shadow Minister for Education and Youth Affairs and Australian Labor Party Member for Werriwa (New South Wales), Mark Latham opened the conference.

In a global economy, where OECD statistics showed that fifty per cent of the output of developed nations related to knowledge, governments should be able to deliver 'employability security' to their citizens through continuing education and information literacy programs, he said.

Public libraries were strategically placed to support community access to information literacy and lifelong learning and their resourcing would be part of a Labor government's nationally focussed, needs-based, education policy, he added.

Repairing the plane in flight

Professor Philip Candy, vice-chancellor, University of Ballarat, told the conference that more attention needed to be paid to how the attributes of information literacy transfer from academic achievement to professional practice. He cited law, medicine and auditing as examples of how professions gather and disseminate information differently. 'Developing information literacy in professional practice is rather like repairing the plane in flight', Professor Candy said. Professional associations should:

- modify specifications for professional accreditation to include information literacy and lifelong learning;

- collaborate with universities and libraries on course design and delivery, with an information literacy focus;
- support research into information literacy in practice in the workplace since workplace needs may differ; and
- provide information literacy development in their members through articles, webpages and other means.

He also launched a book, *The seven faces of information literacy*, by Christine Bruce, at the conference.

Beyond print

Barbara Lepani, researcher, tele-worker and 'foresight strategist', compared children's attraction to electronic multimedia with the change from oral to print culture. Print culture and print literacy demanded a strong commitment to the authority of the author and to the linear structure of story, of a beginning, a middle and an end. The new culture of electronic interactivity and densely visual language will affect the way our brains process and transform information.

'Our current problem with behaviour and learning in children, particularly at puberty, may be linked to a different pattern of neural connectivity in brains of the next generation, as well as wider cultural transformations of identity associated with the changing workplace,' Barbara Lepani added.

Flexible processing of information from diverse sources simultaneously fits with the new workplace, with its growing trend towards self-employment, a rise in modular work — particularly amongst knowledge workers — and high mobility across employers, rather than a reliance on a secure career with one employer.

In this context, librarians had a historic mission to ensure public access to information, knowledge and culture but they must also look for niches to market their expertise and customise their services, as other people gained information literacy skills, she said, adding that she found libraries 'too slow'.

National forum for information literacy

The conference ended with Virginia Walsh, ALIA executive director, encouraging membership of the ALIA information literacy special interest group. Di Booker is the convenor and the group will work to establish a National Forum for Information Literacy. Membership of the special interest group is available to ALIA members for \$8.00 and to non-members for \$10.00. ■