

What is PUBRAISS?

Jan Webb, Logan City Library Services

This question was asked often during the planning stages of this first national conference for the combined Public Libraries Section and Reference and Information Services Section. Held at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre, Queensland from 9–12 November 1997, the conference brought together issues of interest to both groups while focusing on specialised topics. The curiosity surrounding the name added to the unique quality of this conference which attracted more than 400 delegates.

The theme *Creating tomorrow today can you imagine...* produced a wealth of creative ideas and discussion during the three days of conference proceedings. The impressive list of international, national and local speakers provided delegates with a variety of issues and topics to absorb and perhaps put into practice tomorrow.

We were soothed by Walt Crawford's predictions that libraries and librarians will not be doomed, that the 'death of print' is not imminent and that the 'all-digital library really only makes sense in an all-digital future'. He encouraged us to think in terms of building sensible futures for libraries in the 'new millennium'.

We 'imagined' the new British Library described by Dr Brian Lang, chief executive of the British Library. Dr Lang provided us with insight into the British approach to libraries of the future while reminding us that technology is a means to an end — not an end in itself.

Mary Dempsey, commissioner of the Chicago Public Library, invited us all to 'visit' libraries in the United States via their websites to 'check out what they have'. Mary emphasised the need for libraries and librarians to adapt to new technology and utilise its capabilities while pointing out that the introduction of technology has attracted people, particularly young people, back to the library. The challenge for the future will be to maintain adequate funding for libraries.

On a local note, Janine Schmidt's 'nuts and bolts' presentation was excellent, providing a humorous as well as informative overview of the change process at the University of Queensland Library. Using the slogan 'we link people with information', the Univer-

sity of Queensland Library has dealt with change through a 'relentless focus on customers and their needs'.

Rob Carter, chief executive officer of the Brisbane City Council, outlined the steps involved in improving customer service in the largest local government organisation in Australia. Rob described how to translate rhetoric into action and make customer service a reality.

Graeme Simsion, managing director, Simsion Bowles and Associates, gave delegates an overview of business process re-engineering and its relevance for libraries. Part of the re-engineering process is that we need to start from scratch and put our 'radical thinking hats' on and consider procedures and routines which are unnecessary.

As a final note Sergio Carlo Maresca (managing director of Maresca International) presented a very powerful and motivating session on peak performance, on how to take the risks, handle the challenges, be winners and achieve the impossible.

This is just a small sample from the many excellent papers presented during the conference. Also attracting great attention were the social activities which provided time for further discussion and networking. Starting with the welcome reception on Sunday and continuing to morning-tea meetings at the well-represented trade exhibition, lunches, afternoon teas, PUBRace, the conference dinner in 'outer space' and the professional tours of libraries, the conference provided delegates with links to other libraries and librarians. ■

Councillor David Hinchcliffe, Brisbane City Council, greeting delegates at the conference's welcome reception

