Joint-use library an Australian first

Dallas Curry, executive officer, Hervey Bay City Council Library

On 1 March 1997 an Australian 'first' opened its doors. The Hervey Bay City Council and University of Southern Queensland Joint-Use Library has become a prototype for co-operative library ventures around Australia and overseas.

Hervey Bay City is located four hours drive north of Brisbane and has a population of 44 000. The City of Maryborough is close by, and the Wide Bay region, as the area is known, comprises numerous small towns and villages. The University of Southern Queensland's Wide Bay Campus is immediately adjacent to the new library and art gallery complex. The library's internal aspect with a high-vaulted ceiling is one of light and air, with a floor space of 1750 square metres.

There are currently 12.5 full-time equivalent staff employed by Hervey Bay City Council plus the Wide Bay Campus librarian, employed by the university. The library houses approximately 100 000 volumes, of which the university owns 13 000. Community membership of the library is more than 20 000 and registered university membership is 190.

One significant last-minute decision affecting building function was the inclusion of an art gallery within the complex. The gallery is situated across a foyer from the library and brings the total dimensions of the complex to 2100 square metres. Although a planned element, the gallery was not intended to be added to the building until stage two, some years down the track. A certain amount of funding was suddenly available and the decision to go ahead with the gallery was taken.

This late inclusion required some compromise on operational space, a compromise with which USQ was not altogether happy. The university contributed $700 000 towards capital costs and had aimed at a 2000 square metre library.

Consequences of this compromise are now affecting both library and gallery operations less than twelve months after opening. These are a predicted shortage of floor space for shelving within three years, limited meeting areas, no study rooms, no defined office space for the gallery director and no separate tea room for library or gallery staff and volunteers. A lack of general space to plan new services and facilities is a serious hindrance to planning. A toy library is currently envisaged for inclusion in the library but space will affect development of this service.

The campus librarian and the executive officer commenced duties on 7 October 1996, with a brief to create a functioning joint-use library from the shell of a new building. Apart from several specific USQ features, the library's internal design is a standard public library format. As it turned out, this was just as well — the particular community mix in Hervey Bay and some volatile political opposition to the choice of site and proposed partnership with USQ could have created great difficulties. The largely public library aspect of the operation is soothing to the vocal minority opposing this site and partnership.

The internal arrangement comprises circulation desk, reference and OPAC areas, children's collection, fiction, large print, and non-fiction shelving. The decision was taken early to integrate the two collections. Specific USQ elements are the campus librarian's office and the computer laboratory, both within the library. The laboratory allows students access to comprehensive electronic reference resources at USQ Toowoomba. The office permits the campus librarian to directly service academic staff and student reference and computing requirements. Interaction with public library staff is close and continuous. The community users have been understanding of the restricted use of the laboratory due to licensing agreements.

Some internal changes were made by the executive officer prior to moving into the new building. The library plan included a built-in reference desk and OPAC benches. It was believed that this inflexible arrangement of fixed furniture would inhibit future relocation of services within the library as needs changed. These aspects were deleted from the plan prior to completion of the building. The inability of staff to service a reference desk in the first year due to staff spread across two functional areas, the gallery and the library, was another reason to delete this arrangement. USQ had no objections to these changes.

The shelving arrangements were not complete at the time of appointment of the executive officer and he was required to plan, order and arrange the internal shelving at short notice. This proved a challenge with the array of columns throughout the site, and some negotiation was required with USQ Toowoomba as to specific layout of the bays.

The partnership has been strong from the beginning and internal layout decisions continue to be joint efforts. Consultation as to what furniture and equipment is bought and how the on-going functional layout of the library is arranged is close and professional.

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Recently, student patrons indicated that they required a group study area near the reference collection. Following consultation, USQ replaced the carrels in the corner of the reference area with group study tables, while the tables alongside the reference collection were designated for quiet study only. This re-arrangement was a compromise between student needs for discussion and community needs for quiet study.

Systems and procedural integration is perhaps the most successful element of the joint-use operation. There are a number of mechanisms in place by which the joint-use library develops systems, procedures and facilities to accommodate both community and university users. These are based on a memorandum of understanding, and a joint-use library advisory committee, which has a monitoring role. A management meeting of librarians meets fortnightly to oversee the daily operation of the library and the campus librarian regularly receives local USQ user input. Effective policies and systems and agreements operate for opening hours (monitoring is on-going to find the best balance between community and student access), loan periods, borrowing rights, fees and charges.

Some technical problems are yet to be overcome particularly with issues arising from separate catalogue and telecommunication systems. Also it soon became apparent that clear differentiation between university and public library material was necessary for loan purposes. Provision of services to meet the needs of differing clientele within the one location is an ongoing challenge. Currently, however, the joint-use partnership has met those needs with a surprising degree of commonality in user requirements for information and plain, old-fashioned service. ∎

Special libraries CPD videos

As part of the Special Libraries National Committee's initiative to develop contacts and co-operation with other international special libraries organisations, the committee has purchased three videos from the American Special Libraries Association distance education program.
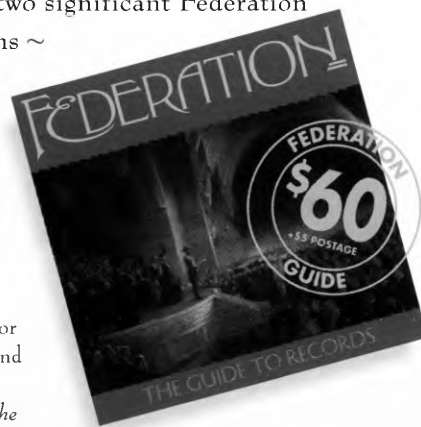
The titles are:

- *Getting what you want: developing a marketing strategy*
- *Getting out of the box: the knowledge management opportunity*
- *The future for librarians: positioning yourself for success*

The videos are held at ALIA National Office and are available for loan to all ALIA and ACLIS members. The videos have been converted so that they are suitable for viewing in Australia. There will be no charge for the loan of the videos but borrowers will be asked to pay the cost of postage. Jane McCarty is the contact at ALIA National Office regarding borrowing of the videos. A brief synopsis and details about the videos will be available on the Special Libraries Section home page on ALIAnet.

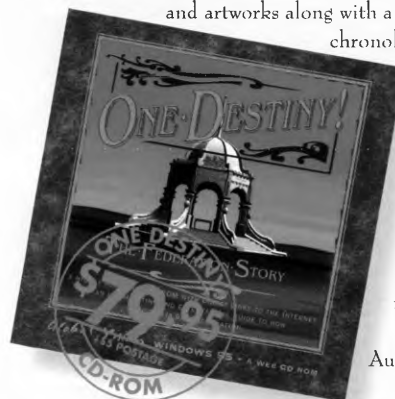For further information please contact Deanne Barrett at dmb@doplar.wa.gov.au; or Jane McCarty, telephone 02 6285 1877, enquiry@alia.org.au. ∎