

Review of reference services

Report from the external review of the National Library of Australia reference services now available

In 1998 the National Library of Australia undertook a review of the reference services it offers through its reading rooms as well as through telephone and electronic inquiry services. The review was undertaken as part of the Library's ongoing program of performance evaluations of key operational areas.

The review addressed three main terms of reference:

- (i) How appropriate are the National Library of Australia's reference services to users' current and anticipated needs in accessing information?
- (ii) How effective are the library's reference services in meeting service objectives?
- (iii) How well-placed are the library's reference services to respond to changes and opportunities in the environment?

An external committee conducted

the review with Professor Mairéad Browne as the chairperson. Other members were Professor Angus Martin, Professor John Fitzgerald, Professor Stuart Cunningham, Dr Suzanne Rickard and Dr Peter Cochrane. The report was published in March 1999 [<http://www.nla.gov.au/refreview/refreview.html>].



The review committee commended the library for recognising that improved access to information in all forms is the key to the future; for working positively to meet both traditional and new demands for information; and for being innovative and responsive to change.

Key highlights are:

- Forward planning: development of research, strategic planning and innovation to keep ahead of the changing reference services environment.
- Services to remote users.
- Promotion of services and user education.

- Staff development: a formal plan will be developed addressing competencies and succession planning.
- National infrastructure: to provide access to both paper and electronic resources in defined subject areas.
- Consultation with other libraries: to shape the delivery of reference services in the digital age.
- Collaborative frameworks: the National Library will contribute to national and international projects.
- Intellectual leadership in the form of models of good practice in operational aspects of reference services.

The full National Library response can be found at <http://www.nla.gov.au/refreview/finalreport.html>. For further information please contact either Roxanne Missingham, 02 6262 1604, missingham@nla.gov.au; or Margy Burn 02 6262 1301, mburn@nla.gov.au, National Library of Australia, Canberra ACT 2600. ■



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