SIN on disc

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The Southern Information Network (SIN) evolved from Southern VCE Network, a group of school, public and TAFE sector librarians which began meeting in 1988/89 to deal with information issues surrounding the changes to the VCE. By 1995 the group's membership had grown and included the five (soon to be three) public libraries in the region as well as the TAFE college and twenty-five secondary schools. The group had also grown in confidence to believe that it could manage a co-operative project with the basic aim of increasing the information resource base of the region.

The *SIN on disc: Aspects of life in the southern region of Melbourne 1850–2000* digitising project grew out of frustration at lack of access to information about the region. Perceived problems within the Network were that a lot of local information was often held by a few organisations with limited access hours or limited access policies; individuals within the region were relied upon as specialist information providers with no thought or plan to broaden access to the information they had; and there were too few copies of a resource to serve many students at once.

In 1995 *SIN on disc* was selected from a list of twelve possible projects seen as enhancing the resource base and information provision of the Network. In mid 1996 the Network received a grant of $17 000 to produce a full-text, searchable, CD-ROM that had both text and visual information on demographics, municipal history, environment, education, recreation, buildings, industry and business, pre-history, people, transport, the arts and religion.

Once we started gathering information on these subject areas we realised that the amount of information available was vast and all we could do was to bring together aspects of each subject area, hence the subtitle 'Aspects of life in the southern region of Melbourne 1850–2000'

Why digitise?

We wanted not only to create a permanent record, but also to increase the options for accessing the information. Our focus was very much on an end-product. The project had two underlying principles:

1. Preservation of information. At least six of the items on *SIN on disc* will be lucky to see the turn of the century. For photos such as the McCafferry coach the millennium bug is a real creature eating away at it all the time.

2. Increased accessibility of information. Digitisation opens up many possibilities for the delivery of information to new audiences and in new formats. The image and its display took precedence over the data or catalogue entry that surrounded that image. *SIN on disc* presents information in a format that young children can access and have confidence in.

One critical aim of the project is that every information agency in the southern region will receive a copy of the disc. This increases the physical access by increasing the access points.

Partnership with the community

Partnerships were critical to the success of the project. *SIN on disc* involved thirty-three community groups across the two-year span of the project. The value of contribution in kind involved is almost immeasurable. However, I estimate that over $20 000 and probably closer to $30 000 was contributed from the historical societies, libraries, schools, and some private researchers to the project. We gave the historical societies the free rein to select material that they felt was important, but we asked them to select materials that did not always see the light of day.

Partnership with INFORMIT–RMIT Publishing

Very early in the project the SIN committee recognised that if we were the authors then we needed to employ a specialist electronic publisher.

At that early stage the end product was seen to be more of a database with a number of digitised records and INFORMIT — as it was known then — appeared to be the logical partner. INFORMIT-RMIT Publishing saw *SIN on disc* as a research and development project that they too could learn from.

Problems encountered

Scanning of text caused immense problems and almost the entire 1500 pages of full-text had to be typed. Except for outsize images such as maps we found the scanning of images relatively easy compared to text. Virus difficulties were also encountered with the text documents. Copyright is a real issue for such projects — we used material that was copies of copies of copies, and in some cases it was almost impossible to track the source back to the original even for an acknowledgment. This is an area that our experience indicated needed a lot of work and understanding.

Sin on disc: Aspects of life in the southern region of Melbourne 1850–2000 is available from: Bayside Library Service 14 Wilson Street, Brighton 3186, phone 03 9591 5907. ∎

7:30pm. Cost: SA Special members $20, non-members $25. For more information contact: Heather Layton, heather.layton@dsto.defence.gov.au

- **7/12 SA Combined Acquisitions/RAISS.** *AGM.* Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Library, Room 418, City West Library, 5:30 for 6pm. Contact: Jenni Jeremy, secretary SA Acquisitions, ph 08 8302 0318, fx 08 8302 0280, jenni.jeremy@unisa.edu.au

- **8/12 SA Health Section.** *AGM.* Details: tba.

TAS

- **2/10 Tas Library Technicians [TALIATecs] section.** *Mini-conference & AGM.* The Grange-Campbell Town, 9:30–4pm. Tasmanian delegates to report on the 10th ALIA National Library Technicians conference. Cost: ALIA members $25, non-members $30. Contact: Kerrie Blyth, ph 03 64245148 or Helen Duggan, ph 03 6265 8848.

VIC

- **4/10 Home Library Services SIG meeting.** Sunshine Library, 301 Hampshire Rd, Sunshine, 10am Contact: Nahum Hall, ph 03 9249 4296.

- **11/10–13/12 Vic Special Libraries section.** *Committee meeting.* Venue: tba, 5:30pm. Meeting dates: 11/10; 8/11; 13/12. Contact: June Hooper, ph 03 9329 8511, fx 03 9321 1574, June.Hooper@heartfoundation.com.au

- **16/10 Vic School Libraries section.** Statewide School Resource Centre, 217 Church Street, Richmond, 9:30am. Contact: Maelor Himbury, ph 03 9336 2555, fx 03 9367 9361, maelor@melbpc.org.au

- **20/10 Vic Branch.** *ALIA Manager of the Year presentation* to Sue McKnight. Deakin Uni, Geelong Waterfront Campus, 1 Gheringhap Street, Geelong, 5 for 6pm. Optional dinner to follow @ $40 per head at nearby restaurant. *RSVP.* Helen Sweeny, h.sweeny@c031.aone.net.au

- **22/10 Monash University** *staff reunion for ex-staff and guests, all campuses.* Monash University Club, Main dining room, Wellington Road, Clayton, 6pm. Cost: $16.50pp, payable on the night. Contact: Jan Gill, ph 03 9905 9104, fx 03 9905 2617,jangill@lib.monash.edu.au or Elaine Allan, ph 03 9905 2647, fx 03 9905 2611, Elaine.Allan@lib.monash.edu.au *RSVP by 12/10.*

- **23–24/10 Vic Children's & Youth Services section.** *Literature weekend — putting you in the picture — exploration of the picture books for children.* Speakers include: Pamela Allen, Jeannette Rowe, Andrew and Janet Mclean. Oceanic Whitehall, Sorrento. ALIA members: $215, meals and accomodation. More information: Terry May, ph 03 9743 1168.

- **26/10 Vic Library Technician section.** *Post-conference meeting.* Our Stu-