

The information profession in the twenty first century

Conference program highlights

An ambitious program of stimulating speakers has been confirmed. The umbrella theme of *Capitalising on knowledge — the information profession in the 21st century* will provide national and international speakers with the scope to examine who will be the information providers as this new century unfolds, and on what basis.

Each day of the conference carries a different focus. Day 1 will concentrate on the changing information environment and the way in which major social, political, economic, legal and technology influences will affect how information is accessed and disseminated over the next few years. How will information be de-

livered? What will be the impact of media convergence? Will libraries still be relevant? These questions will also embrace discussion about intellectual property, information ownership, privacy and censorship.

On day 2 the focus changes to understanding the needs of the information consumer. Different streams will cover knowledge management, content and content providers, accessibility of services and the technology that will drive this access.

Throughout day 3 speakers will turn their attention to the creators of information, authors and publishers, and the changing roles of the information profes-

sions. The keynote speaker on this day, Dr José-Marie Grifiths, will give an overview of the information professions and the challenges they face in serving information creators and users in the 21st century.

Following are a number of highlights from the conference program — of course there are many more, too many to mention in this limited space. Watch the conference website [<http://www.alia.org.au/conference/alia2000>], it is being revised regularly with program updates and speaker abstracts.



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The environment and the future

Paul Twomey — Tuesday 24 October, 9:00am

Dr Paul Twomey, chief executive officer of the National Office for the Information Economy, and the Federal government's Special Adviser for the Information Economy and Technology, will be the first keynote address for the conference. The National Office for the Information Economy has direct responsibility for developing and co-ordinating strategies to address the convergence of the information economy, information technology and telecommunications issues driven by the digital revolution. As Special Adviser, Dr Twomey is charged with providing strategic advice to the government on developing its information economy and information technology priorities and strategies, including a National Strategy for the Information Economy. Dr Twomey replaces the Hon Peter McGauran on the conference program.

Legal issues and the public library

Ann K Symons — Tuesday 24
October, 3:30pm

With the advent of the web browser in the early part of the 1990s, libraries in the United States began offering internet access for patrons in great numbers. In 1997 the United States Supreme Court decision declared the internet, taken as a whole [excluding those sites deemed illegal by law] to be protected under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. The last three years have been legally active ones: citizens suing their public library for filtering, mothers suing their public library for not filtering, Congress trying to pass law after law requiring libraries to filter. Ann Symons will present an overview of internet library issues and recent legal challenges.



In news just to hand, Ann K Symons is the 2000 recipient of the ALA Elizabeth Futas Catalyst for Change Award. This award recognises and honours a librarian who invests time and talent to make positive changes in the profession of librarianship.

Libraries, knowledge management, and higher education in an electronic environment,

Brian L Hawkins — Wednesday 25
October, 9:00am — keynote address

This presentation discusses the challenges that libraries face as the transition from print-on-paper to digital environments unfolds. An attempt is made to explore the newly-emerging field of knowledge management and to explore its implications for the world of academic libraries. Then, examining the shortfalls of the current electronic environment, this paper identifies a vision for which we might ultimately strive and explores how we might go about operationalising a portion of this, envisioning a portal that would serve the academic environment. Finally, the challenge of collaboration will be explored, as a major obstacle in accomplishing the goals that have been identified.



User perspectives of the future of the internet

Trevor Barr — Wednesday 25
October, 10:30am

The internet is widely regarded as the most significant change to contemporary modes of communication. The internet's extraordinary growth and the global reach of its platforms, the passion of its adherents and its maze of unresolved issues all qualify it as a paradigm shift in communications. In the next few years the likely exponential growth of internet services will make substantial demands on understanding and managing the complexity that will arise from both the explosion of both the number of connected devices and the volume of information available.



It is critical, however, that these new enabling technologies meet the needs of people, are useful, flexible, readily accessible and affordable. There is an urgent need for research about internet communities, about what motivates people to go onto

Program highlights, continued...

the Net, and what people want the internet to be in the next few years.

Ensuring effective access to library services

José-Marie Griffiths and Donald W King —
Wednesday 25 October, 2:00pm

One of the current issues dominating discussions of access is that of the 'digital divide'. While originally defined in rather narrow terms, access to technology, this issue is, in fact, much broader and deeper. Furthermore, technology is only a minor component of the divide. This presentation will re-define the digital divide and discuss its relationship to accessing library services in particular.

Some detailed examples will be given of how libraries should deal with the array of traditional print-on-paper, electronic journals, CD-ROM and digital full-text article databases. Evidence demonstrates that librarians should not think in either/or terms, but rather, they should consider economic and use factors which can optimise combinations of these media types.

Electronic publishing in the 21st century

Donald W King — Wednesday 25
October, 4:30pm

This presentation deals with the many myths and realities of electronic journals. It draws upon hundreds of studies performed by the speaker. These studies have involved readership surveys (13 591 responses); over 100 in-depth cost studies of publishing, libraries, and other information services; a journal characteristics tracking study; and an historical review of over 800 relevant publications. Particular issues include the use, usefulness, and value of scholarly journals; the causes and consequences of spiralling prices; ways in which electronic journals and article text databases can make a difference; and what authors, readers, librarians and publishers can do to make the future publishing system successful.



The information professions: Serving information creators and users

José-Marie Griffiths — Thursday 26
October, 9:00am — keynote address

The information revolution has spawned a growing information industry that is now driving world economies. Information technology, particularly the internet and World Wide Web have given the individual the opportunity to be both creator and user of information content. And, whether we like it or not, millions of people are using the web as if it were a library, as a place to go for information retrieval, validation and discussion. The web, of course, is *not* a library, but it is already changing the most basic foundations of knowledge creation, sharing and application worldwide. We, as librarians and information scientists, face the challenges of serving the expanding and changing relationship between information creators and users. As we attempt to do so, there will be increased pressure on our professions to form the bridges across and/or be the integrators of multi-faceted endeav-



ours that blur the boundaries among the information disciplines; the three building blocks of information science (people, knowledge and tools); and research, education and practice. What new roles will emerge and what additional skills will we need in order to be successful? How can we help bridge the 'digital divide'?

Information in the 21st century: a heretical view

James O'Loghlin — Thursday
26 October, 3:30pm


James O'Loghlin is Australia's favorite criminal lawyer and one of Australia's leading stand-up comedians. Since 1990, he has regularly appeared as the feature comic in all the major comedy venues in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. James is a regular guest on 'Good News Week' and has appeared on 'Hey Hey Its Saturday', 'Lateline' and 'Midday'.

James will be taking a heretical look at information in the 21st century. He is the last speaker before the conference closing ceremony. Come and take a lighter look at the profession from a 'non-librarian'. James may be wandering the conference sessions on Thursday, so keep an eye out for him...



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