

# The good, the bad and the ugly of LIS education

*Reflective Practice: Library and Information Studies Education for the Future*

Library and information science education, here and abroad, came under the microscope when about thirty high profile educators and practitioners gathered for *Reflective Practice: Library and Information Studies Education for the Future* in Adelaide in December at the University of South Australia.

The major Australian library schools were represented at the two-day seminar organised by Professor Larry Amey of the University of South Australia School of Communication and Information Studies, Magill campus. The seminar cost was sponsored in full by the University of SA Library and the UniSA Library and Information Management Team.

A special highlight was the attendance of Professor Ken Haycock and Dr Ann Curry, both from the University of British Columbia, Canada.

Professor Haycock is the director, of the School of Library, Archival and Information Studies. He chaired the national steering committee for the 1999 Congress on Professional Education, held in Washington DC. His keynote address to the Adelaide seminar provided highlights of the North American issues relating to graduate education of professional librarians and stimulated conversation concerning parallel issues in Australia.

Dr Curry is the chair of the Library and Information Studies Program at University of British Columbia, and provided the seminar with an in-depth look at trends in Canadian Library and Information Science, based on a direct phone and follow-up e-mail survey conducted of Canadian library school heads, over a two-year period. The title of her keynote speech, 'Canadian LIS education: creating entrepreneurs, not functionnaires' provided an indication of her findings. (In Canada, the French word *fonctionnaire* is a slightly pejorative way of describing a civil servant who follows a set pattern of rules and performs well the tasks assigned, but initiates no suggestions for change, says Curry).

Canada has only seven schools of library and information science and there were clear parallels throughout her talk with the politics and economics of current issues facing Australian LIS educators.

Dr Ross Todd, Head, Department of Information Studies University of Technology, Sydney, and the Deputy-Chair of the ALIA Board of Education gave a responding address about how ALIA is addressing a range of issues in LIS education, including a proposal for a broadening of membership criteria across the information industry.

The seminar provided a lively forum of divergent opinion on a range of issues including a spirited debate on whether the core value of 'intellectual freedom' was still an imperative to be championed by today's Australian library information sector.

'These encounters are food and drink to us. They keep us going,' said participant Don Schauder (Monash University) of the final session.

Curriculum, cross-institutional collaboration, research, methods of teaching, and continuing professional development were among issues discussed and debated.

The group discussed:

- the re-examination of teaching methods;
- the offering of web-based elective subjects by library schools in a collaborative framework (akin to the distributed national collection concept); and
- ways in which ALIA course recognition could be effectively used to encourage best practice in LIS education.

The seminar concluded with a raft of recommendations that will be further discussed at another meeting to coincide with the ALIA Biennial Conference in Canberra in October, 2000.

A full report of the seminar will appear in the February 2000 issue of the *Australian Library Journal*. ■

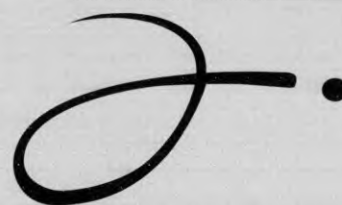


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