

to information professionals if we bury our heads in the sand and ignore these massive strategic shifts that are occurring right now globally. We must keep up with the changes. We must continue to maintain our professional expertise in evaluating all information resources including these massive, if sometimes maddening new information resources, just as traditional librarians have evaluated printed publications for generations. We must maintain our professional reputations as being the professionals who understand the information landscape, who know the best information resources, how to use the new resources, what their strengths and weaknesses are and how much they cost.

Different roles for different libraries

As a profession, we probably also need to recognise that these changes are suddenly highlighting in quite a dramatic way the different priorities in different types of libraries, as never before. Sure there will still be libraries with books and catalogues and magazines and AV materials. But some special libraries for

instance, which have always existed only to support the objectives of their parent bodies by locating and transferring knowledge, may not now need physical libraries. They may now just need desks with computers on them — they may now just need to work 'virtually'. So what does that mean for special librarians in the future? How will their roles change in the new era?

How can *public libraries* compete with the internet for attention from their clients — teenagers, young professionals, corporates, those with hobbies?

How are *school librarians* maximising the benefits of the new era for their students and teachers?

How can *all libraries* exploit the internet and use the professional services now so easily delivered on an internet platform to improve and extend services to library clients? How can we as librarians and information professionals 'add value' for our clients and our stakeholders? Which libraries will be offering 'virtual reference' in the

coming months and years?

All of these issues and more will be explored and debated at *Information Online* in January 2003. This is a fantastic opportunity to hone your information skills, to learn how others are surviving and thriving in the 'new era', and to check out what the industry offers us and what the industry also offers our clients today.

The conference registration brochure is available at <http://www.alia.org.au/conferences/online2003/> where you can also check out who is exhibiting and a wide range of equally exciting satellite events — just to make your travel dollar go further! You can register online — or you can call the conference organisers Conference Action, 02 9437 9333 e-mail: confact@conferenceaction.com.au and ask Haydn Brakell to ensure a brochure is mailed to you.

Make sure you reserve a place at *Information Online 2003* so that you gather ideas and the information you need to survive and thrive in the 'new era'. ■

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Give us a 'Mambo' building!

The Avalon Library and Recreation Centre

The Avalon Recreation Centre (and the library which it houses) is Brewster Hjorth's newest and most beguiling contribution to Australian civic architecture to date.

Avalon, on Sydney's northern peninsular is a friendly beachside village where the locals care deeply for their relaxed way of life. It was Avalon that unceremoniously sent Hollywood packing when it was proposed to move *Baywatch* to Australia.

When it came to building a new community centre for the village, Pittwater Council was careful to ensure that the friendly atmosphere was kept. 'Give us a Mambo building' demanded one councillor, and they got it!

The site selected for the new library is a good stones throw from the beach and next to the old soccer ground which is being converted to a new village green. The library in effect is coming home, as it used to operate from an old shop behind its new location.

Just as the building is unlike most other Council-owned structures so the library differs from its big city counterparts. Avalon Library is a community library operated for the most part by volunteers with the direction of Council's library manager, Helen Clarke.

To mark their relocation to the new building the library is throwing away their card filing system and moving in

to the computer age.

The building has been designed as a 'beach house' with large enclosed verandahs and big overhanging corrugated iron roofs. The 'verandahs' are enclosed with banks of glass louvres and their floors are polished Australian hardwood.

The verandahs are home to the informal spaces of the library, the children's area, the reading areas and the periodical collection. They are very comfortable spaces which encourage a casual and friendly use, not far removed from those old beach holiday cottages with old cane furniture and occasional visits from the local kookaburra!

While the feelings created by some of the internal spaces may encourage reminiscence, the building is state of the art. 'As far as we're aware it's the first major library to be built as an un-airconditioned facility for many years' says the designer Ian Brewster.

In fact those banks of glass louvres are carefully placed to allow natural cross ventilation. They work with the unusual roof form to create a 'thermal



The new Avalon Recreation Centre

chimney' which helps power the natural ventilation system — but without using any power.

The activity rooms and the internal sports hall which form the rest of the building operate in a similar way making a very eco-friendly building.

Brewster Hjorth developed a 'loose fit' design approach for the project which involves the use of panelled timber ceiling systems and timber floors set against the more modern concrete and steel frame.

The architects explain:

'You design the finishes so they don't have to line up perfectly, in fact the building looks friendlier and more relaxed if they don't.'

'We're using a lot of the lessons which were learnt at Avalon on some of our current projects including Strathfield, Castle Hill and Swansea Libraries'.

One of these lessons involves the new approach to Council customer service desks and their integration with the rest of the facility. At Avalon these facilities are in separate tenancies, although the customer service area is

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