

Obituary

James O'Brien BA MS (Louisiana State) AALIA

James O'Brien was born and raised in Mississippi and New Orleans. His family was closely linked to the Salvation Army and eschewed material goods. He graduated from Louisiana State University, became a librarian and worked in the Library of Congress in Washington, DC and the University of Maryland before going abroad. He came to Australia via Greece. When he came to South Australia in 1972 as chief librarian at the Salisbury College of Advanced Education, he brought with him a focus on client services which was quite new and different in Australia at the time. This encompassed a commitment to co-operation amongst libraries for the benefit of the users, a commitment to reciprocal borrowing and a commitment to reader services, particularly reader education. He was keenly aware of the lack of collection resources in College of Advanced Education libraries in the 1970s, and at the same time was committed to the principles of open access and lifelong learning.

At Kuring-gai College of Advanced Education, where he was head of the Resources Centre from 1977 to 1989, James created a library which was renowned for both its service and its emphasis on the needs of its clients and, especially, the importance of reader education. He embraced all that new technology had to offer where he considered it to be appropriate and of benefit to the user. Warmly regarded by both clients and staff, James created a welcoming environment and built strong collections to support the academic programs of the College. As chair of the Courses Accreditation Committee of the Academic Board, he ensured that the programs were properly resourced.

From 1991 to 1999, James was the director of Library and Information Services at the Macarthur Institute of Higher Education, later the University of Western Sydney

(Macarthur). His library was known for the demonstrated efficiency of technical services which became noted for its innovations in processing as well as the excellence of client services. During his tenure, it was the first library to pilot the 3M self-charge system, an Australian-developed system which has subsequently been adopted across Australia and internationally.

Throughout his career, James O'Brien demonstrated his strengths in developing collections, including encouraging the donation of excellent resources, and his talents as a motivator and encourager of library staff. He created happy and supportive environments for work and study and demonstrated leadership by example. He was loved and very much respected wherever he went.

James was a kind, good and caring person who went out of his way to make people around him feel as if they mattered. He enjoyed life to the full. He lived his life one day at a time and made each one really count. He was generous and thoughtful, highly intelligent and blessed with an excellent memory which enabled him to recall past shared experiences — he told wonderful stories wonderfully. He was a punter of note and travelled to country races around Australia. He enjoyed cooking, was a wine connoisseur and fond of Jack Daniels. He played chess badly!

James was a distinguished librarian who had a personal philosophy of librarianship, with strong views on the role and contribution of libraries in today's society and a wonderful colleague and friend. Since his retirement, James has been much missed. Now that he is gone from us forever, he will be missed even more.

Alex Byrne, Chuck Kavalec, Janine Schmidt and Rona Wade.

Master of information services.

This exciting new graduate course will make you eligible to fill senior roles in the information services, information brokerage, information and knowledge management industries and expose you to advanced employment opportunities in these areas.

With two exit points at Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate level; professional recognition of the three

streams at Graduate Diploma level; a choice of electives and targeted research units - there is room to tailor the course to meet your needs and your career aspirations. For more information, please contact Student Support Officer, School of Computer and Information Science, Ph: (08) 9370 6299 Fax: (08) 9370 6100 Email: scis.info@ecu.edu.au



www.ecugreatcareers.com



... from previous page

ing. Venue: tba. 18/11; 9/12. For more information contact: Jennifer Bodey, ph 08 8405 6587, jbodey@portenf.sa.gov.au

• 27/11 Academic, Research and Collection Management.

End of year event, guest speaker: Helen Hennessey, Office for the Commissioner for Public Employment (OCPE), on 'Library services and collection management within the public service'. Venue: tba.

• 11/12 ALIA SA. *General meeting*. Research Room, Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Library, City West Campus, University of South Australia, 5:30 for 5:45pm (unless otherwise indicated). Contact: Marion Fielke, ph 08 8384 0050, fx 08 8384 0051, marfie@onkaparinga.sa.gov.au

VIC

• 11/11 Specials Libraries (Vic).

General meeting. Swets Blackwell, 4 Bennetts Lane, Melbourne, 5:30pm. *RSVP*: Traci Webb, twebb@au.swetsblackwell.com

• 12/11 Vic Library Technicians.

Committee meeting. State Library of Victoria, meet in the Swanston Street foyer at 6pm. Everyone is welcome, no charge, light supper provided. *RSVPs essential*: Kerrie Kelly, ph 03 8664 7129, kkelly@slv.vic.gov.au

• 16/11 Schools Victoria. AGM and committee meeting.

Santa Maria College Library, Northcote. AGM starting at 9am. All ALIA members are warmly invited to attend. For further information contact: Maree McDonagh, convenor, ph 03 9334 0012, maree.mcdonagh@overnewton.vic.edu.au

• 18/11 SA Library Technicians.

General meeting. Venue: tba. For more information contact: Jennifer Bodey, ph 08 8405 6587, jbodey@portenf.sa.gov.au

21/11 Christian Librarians' Network Australia & New Zealand dinner.

Can reading Christian books be dangerous? Speaker: Tim Costello. Presbyterian Theological College, 684 Elgar Road, Box Hill North 3108, 7 for 7:30pm, \$25. Contact: Margaret Zarifeh, ph 03 9848 4531 (ah), 03 9898 9384 (bh), fx 03 9898 9872, wmarifeh@hotmail.com

25/11 Spire Project.

Exceptional internet research, 3hr seminar by David Novak of the Spire Project. Melbourne, St Kilda Road, Parkview Hotel, 9-12:30pm. Cost: just \$115. See <http://SpireProject.com/pdf09.pdf> or contact david@spireproject.com, fx 08 9225 5919.

• December Special Libraries (Vic).

End of year/Xmas drinks and

continued next page...