

Forum discusses national action plan

On 15 February, representatives of the major library peak bodies met at the National Library of Australia to discuss a range of issues affecting the sector as a whole. Present were: Mary Greenfield, Australian Law Librarians' Group; June Wall, Australian School Libraries' Association; Paul Bentley, ALIA Information Specialists' Group; Joyce Kirk, ALIA vice-president, Jennefer Nicholson ALIA executive director, Karen Vitullo, Federal Libraries Information Network (FLIN), Roslynn Membrey, Association of Parliamentary Libraries of Australasia, Jill Smith, Health Libraries Australia; Helen Hayes and John Shipp, Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL); Fran Awcock, Council of Australian State Librarians (CASL), Helena Zobec, ALIA TAFE National Group; and Jan Fullerton, David Toll, and Jasmine Cameron from the National Library of Australia (NLA).

The purpose of the forum was to discuss issues of mutual interest to the library sector and to decide if any of the issues should be addressed through a national plan of action. There is a tradition of voluntary co-operation in the library sector and now there is a need to extend this to

new partnerships and alliances in an environment where the traditional barriers between sectors and institutions are breaking down. The focus needs to be on users, and libraries must be prepared to act as a united sector to achieve improvements in infrastructure and service delivery to users.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- libraries often do not present a clear vision to those responsible for library funding;
- the public does not need to see the library as part of the service they receive, but those responsible for funding need to be aware of the library's role;
- libraries need to find a way to be more closely aligned with political and economic agendas;
- it is difficult for government agencies to get approval for plans which do not show a tangible economic benefit;
- it is essential that the library sector present as a single voice to get funding for significant infrastructure development;
- there is value in trying to move the focus from strictly economic issues although social and cultural value is not necessarily measureable in dollar terms.

Collecting

It was agreed that the most obvious areas for co-operation is in acquisition of datasets. A discussion on the issue of consortia approaches to dataset licensing resulted in a decision that the NLA and CAUL would work on a model which would allow institutions to opt in or opt out as they wished.

It was also agreed that there needed to be a national approach to the collecting and long-term preservation of electronic resources. The NLA will work on a model for further co-operation at national level.

The lack of information about user behaviour was discussed. The Australian Library Collections Task Force has this on its agenda, but it was felt a more high-level approach also needed to be taken. It was suggested that a detailed research report was needed. Such as study should look at how users find and use information, and what outcomes are achieved. CAUL will do some preliminary work on scoping this project.

Existing print collections

There was discussion of co-operative storage options. Proposals to date have involved the university sector, but there is a

need for co-operative stores which cater to other sectors, such as special libraries, parliamentary libraries and other government libraries. The store need not be a single physical store as a national virtual store should achieve the same results. A set of protocols would need to be developed. CAUL, CASL and the NLA undertook to work on this.

Finding material

An overview of current Kinetica developments and plans was presented.

There was brief discussion of the ARLIN (Australian Research Library Network) project being led by Latrobe University.

Discovery of subject portals and metadata repositories is within the work being undertaken by the NLA's current proof-of-concept work for a national metadata repository.

Information literacy

A very brief discussion of this item indicated that there is quite a lot of work being undertaken already, including the *Feasibility study for the development of a national coalition for information literacy advocacy* sponsored by ALIA, the National Library of Australia, and the National Office for the Information Economy (NOIE).

Access to resources

The NLA's role as a central point for both reference and document delivery services was discussed. It was agreed that universities also needed to play a strong role in the provision of access to materials as they are to a large extent publicly funded and have a community responsibility in this area.

A business model needs to be developed for future access to information, particularly for those people with no institutional affiliations.

Supporting libraries

Workforce planning issues are being investigated by the State Library of Victoria, the results of which should be widely applicable. ALIA is also looking at lifelong learning issues for library staff through the LISEKA Project (Library and Information Science Education for the Knowledge Age).

Advancing the profile of libraries

It was agreed that it is important that libraries in all sectors support each other's agendas and avoid criticism or undermining the achievements of others.

Conclusion

It was agreed that the NLA would convene the forum on an annual basis. ■



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