

10th Asia Pacific Special, Health and Law Librarians' Conference



They came from all over Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Singapore, Indonesia, Norway, United States and United Kingdom and they celebrated the future in style. More than 600 delegates and thirty-one exhibitors participated in the 10th Asia Pacific Special Health and Law Librarians' conference and trade exhibition in Adelaide August 2003.

To make the conference as inclusive as possible, the committee awarded a small number of scholarships to those with financial hardship, and a number of students from the University of South Australia School of Information Studies course also attended as rapporteurs. Library staff from Adelaide who were not able to attend the conference were granted visitors passes to attend the trade exhibition — the resulting boost in visitors to the exhibition was appreciated by exhibitors.

A consistent theme throughout the conference was that librarians do have something to celebrate and that we contribute in a variety of ways to our organisations, regardless of our title. Many of the speakers were working in areas outside the library — as information brokers, in academia and publishing — but they spoke of the benefit of their library training to their current employment. The other major theme was the value and importance of collaboration — particularly in relation to partnering with suppliers and consortia.

The speakers

Marianne Broadbent of Gartner Group opened the conference with the importance of leadership skills. Her paper 'Learning leadership's lessons — for a future worth celebrating' examined how business, industry and government executives are facing much greater pressures to reduce costs, accelerate innovation, cautiously risk, and to govern appropriately. She said that real leaders know that there are always trade-offs and it's how you manage the trade-offs that matters. Real leaders know it is people who make things happen and that any team should be much greater than the sum of its parts. In an increasingly complex environment, information and technology managers have to blend with their business or government agencies. It's not about alignment, it's about integration and being 'of' your enterprise. Information and technology professionals and managers have six imperatives that they must 'live' to be effective and to gain deserved credibility. They must simultaneously lead, anticipate, strategise, organise, deliver and measure. And often they have to 'lead from the back' or lead through influence to be effective. It's not easy, but then nothing worth doing is easy.

Richard Susskind gave some insights into how to define our roles within our organisations. He was absolutely fascinating and

spoke about 'How to think about the future'. He reflected on the impact of current, emerging and future technologies on the work and careers of librarians. Much of his presentation was devoted to adopting an appropriate mind-set for the future, encouraging delegates to reflect on the fundamental

value that they add through their work, to embrace innovation as well as automation through technology, and to consider that the future is not pre-determined but is an exciting set of possibilities for librarians to exploit. He argued that the professions, in the future, will no longer be dominated by the current delivery model: one-to-one, consultative advisory service. Instead, much professional knowledge and experience will be imparted via information systems, designed and developed by a new breed of 'information engineers'. He suggested that many librarians are ideally suited to perform this new role, as well as to provide all manner of other exciting services in the coming age of the information-technology-based information society.

Linda Watson gave some insights into the medical publishing industry in the United States with the collaboration between commercial and public entities with PubMed. Linda's presentation, 'PubMed, PubMed Central, and MEDLINEplus: a trio of essential resources for health' discussed how for biomedical information, the world relies on the products and services of the United States National Library of Medicine (NLM). She focused on three products — PubMed, which encompasses MEDLINE, PubMed Central (PMC), a new and growing digital archive for the life sciences journal literature, and MEDLINEplus, NLM's website for consumer health information. She reflected on how these products are viewed by library staff and colleagues and by the clients that they serve.

David Snowden spoke on 'Just-in-time knowledge management' where the emphasis is on enabling informal communities to share knowledge. He advocates that knowledge managers must concentrate on the channels through which knowledge flows, as much as managing knowledge itself. David looked at three common errors in the knowledge management field and



Conference convenor Philip Keane with keynote speaker Marianne Broadbent

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laid the groundwork for learning from the concept of just-in-time knowledge management solutions. He also emphasised that human skills will never go out of fashion and it is these and not the information technology that will ensure our future.

Simon Tupman closed with a presentation 'Purpose, passion and professionalism — the keys to knowledge management and service success' and why it is important to have a passion for what you do. In his upbeat, humorous and inspirational close, Simon outlined his keys to success as well as drawing on the highlights of other presentations from this conference.

Papers from all of the presentations are available on the ALIA website [<http://conferences.alia.org.au/shllc2003/>].

The social program

The cocktail reception was hosted by the South Australian Museum. Many interstate visitors found the venue most interesting and all commented on how much they enjoyed the function.

At the conference dinner each table was challenged to find the longest word using the letter graffiti supplied. Congratulations to the winning table for making the longest word: 'proantidisestab-lishmentarianism'

The dinner, sponsored by LexisNexis, tantalised our tastebuds and Mem Fox, author of more than twenty-five picture books for children, regaled us with tales of her life, interspersed with entertaining readings from some of her books. The band 'Aire Flamenco', stimulated our feet.

Trade exhibition

There was a great turnout of exhibitors at the conference. The exhibitions were of an excellent standard and drew many delegates who were not just after their 'disco' pens or mud cake! The Exhibition Hall became the place to be and the exhibition was a huge contribution to the success of this conference.

EBSCO EXPRESS

The EBSCO EXPRESS sponsored by EBSCO was a great success. The editor, Jo-anne Fuller and her cadet, Trevor Wakely did a splendid job keeping us informed with changes to the program and sessions not to miss.

Library tours

Visits to sixteen libraries located around Adelaide were organised and approximately 150 delegates took part in the tours. Participating libraries represented private, court and university law libraries; medical research and child health libraries; and a wide range of special libraries with collections covering technical, aquatic, and nutritional sciences as well as botanical, embroidery, religion and art. A small group also ventured to the State Library of South Australia to view the recently opened building and facilities.

Conference committee

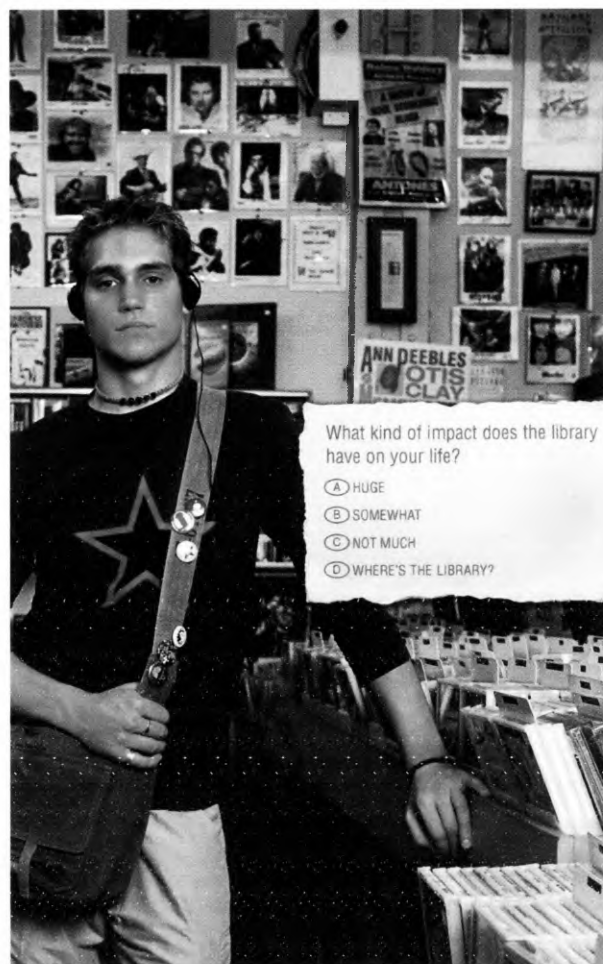
Many people assisted in putting this conference together and they must all be thanked — Philip Keane, conference convenor; Barbara Coat, Wendy Hackel and Heather Carine, program committee; Caryl Armstrong and Geraldine Wardle, sponsorship and trade committee; Mary Peterson, social program/website; Georgia Livissianos, Karen Dankiw and Jackie Williams, publicity committee; Di Thompson, treasurer; Kate Sinclair, specials representative; Juliet Marconi, health representative; and Jennie Speirs, law representative.

Sponsors

A big thank you must go to all the conference sponsors, especially to the major sponsors CCH Australia, and EBSCO. Thank you also to Lexis Nexis, Thomson Gale, Ovid Technologies, the Attorney-General's Department (SA), and Dynix.

Where to now?

The greatest highlight of the conference was the mixture of law, specials and health in one forum. The conference provided an opportunity to network with members outside of our areas and to share areas of common interest. So where to now? What will be your next major professional development opportunity? ■



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