

RAILS2: On track for the future

Speakers at RAILS2 must be congratulated for their admirable restraint: there was only an occasional railway joke or pun. Entirely coincidentally, though, those who attended had the chance to view the National Library of Australia's photographic exhibition *Trainspotting*, which commemorates the sesquicentenary of the running of the first trains in New South Wales and similar anniversaries in other states.

The RAILS2 seminar (RAILS stands for Research Applications in Information and Library Studies) was held at the NLA on 16–17 September 2005. Run by Charles Sturt University with the generous support of the National Library, the theme of RAILS2 was 'Linking research with practice'. It aimed to build links between researchers in practice and those coming from the academy. Through partnerships among educators, researchers and practitioners we hope that informed and innovative practice will be nurtured in library and information services. For RAILS2 we combined speakers from national information/heritage institutions, speakers from the academic researchers, and practitioner–researchers. The success of the mix can be seen in the representation of papers from all groups. Special note needs to be made of the first-time practitioner presenters: this is an indication of the strength of some of the research going on out there.

Stephen Ellis (National Archives), Meg Labrum (National Film and Sound Archive) and Tony Boston (NLA) provided the big-picture setting, outlining institutional support for research in LIS and related fields and the research priorities for these organisations. In addition, Kerry Smith (chair of ALIA's Research Committee) emphasised the growing acknowledgement and support by ALIA of the need for research in our field and its importance for both practitioners and academics. There followed a wide collection of papers that well illustrated the breadth and depth of research activity currently underway. Thus Gaby Haddow, as a practitioner, discussed how to improve the communication of research and its implementation in practice; Brian Lloyd used two case studies to identify the useful characteristics of research papers for those working in the field; Mike Middleton outlined QUT's approach to developing an academic research program and how that feeds back into and benefits teaching and industry practice, and Kerrie Burgess described the State Library of New South Wales' Research and Evaluation program. Other papers covered topics as diverse as getting the books out of the library and to the public — specifically onto commuter trains; the impact of the retirement of the baby boomer generation on public

libraries; the development of information literacy programs in the TAFE environment and the changing nature of the knowledge and qualifications called for in job advertisements for LIS positions. Two papers dwelt on historical topics, one by Jean Preer (Indiana University) and the other from Charles Sturt University's Don Boadle.

Abstracts of the papers presented at RAILS2 are available from the National Library's website: <http://www.nla.gov.au/initiatives/meetings/railprog.html>. They will be available as an e-publication published by Charles Sturt University's Centre for Information Studies in due course: see http://www.csu.edu.au/faculty/sciagr/sis/CIS/e_pubs.htm (where the papers from RAILS1 are available).

Special mention needs to be made of the NLA, whose generous assistance was vital to the smooth running of this seminar. The success of RAILS2 means that RAILS is on track for the future (couldn't resist that one!) RAILS3 will be held on 23 September 2006 in Perth, immediately after the ALIA Biennial Conference.

Ross Harvey and Bob Pymm, Charles Sturt University

Open Access, Open Archives and Open Source

The National Scholarly Communications Forum Roundtable for 2005 was on the theme of 'Open Access, Open Archives and Open Source'. It was held at the State Library of NSW on Tuesday 27 September. The NSCF's 19th Roundtable brought together Australian and international leaders and policy makers. Presentations are available on the net at <http://www.humanities.org.au/Events/NSCF/Current/Current.htm>.

Dr Mike Sargent, chair of the Australian Government's e-Research Co-ordinating Committee, highlighted the interaction of the Government's Research Quality and Accessibility Frameworks. Dr Sargent commented that the Government regards publicly funded research as a public good and that, as a general statement of principle, researchers ought to be able to find out what research is being undertaken and gain access to that research. Other speakers included Dr Michael Jubb (UK), Professor Stevan Hamad (Canada) and Professor John Unsworth (USA). Professor Unsworth emphasised that open access to ideas is both the basic mission and the best business model for higher education.

The National Scholarly Communication Forum, in a final panel discussion, noted that co-ordinated Open Access initiatives would allow Australian research to have greater impact and distribution both nationally and globally. ARIIC (the Australian Research Information and Infrastructure Committee) has already publicly stated that such initiatives will allow 'the widest possible dissemination of ideas and knowledge, within effective quality assurance frameworks of Australian research and its long-term preservation and maximise the cost-effective use of public funds'.

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