

Chasing the sun...

SA awarded for world-first libraries' initiative

The South Australian Health Services Libraries Consortium, in conjunction with the SWICE library service of the UK National Health Service, has won an international award for their part in a new initiative which provides an after hours virtual reference service for clinicians.

'Chasing the Sun' is a collaborative project between the South Australian Health Libraries Consortium and UK National Health Service libraries in the South West Region of England.

In early December 2004, 'Chasing the Sun' won the award for 'Best information or knowledge team in the public

sector' at the 2004 International Information Industry Awards in London.

International project co-ordinator, Mary Peterson, explained that 'Chasing the Sun is an after-business hours online reference service for urgent clinical questions relating to patient care'.

'The award recognises the innovative approach to the use of technology to solve a problem and provide an extended service as well as the international collaborative effort.'

Ms Peterson, a librarian from the Royal Adelaide Hospital/IMVS, and Sue Rockliff from The Queen Elizabeth Hospital have co-ordinated the project from South Australia.



Mary Peterson (left) and Sue Rockliff with their award

Ms Peterson says the project enables clinicians to have access to experienced, professional assistance using electronic library and information resources after hours.

Stuart Benjamin, knowledge resources development manager, Avon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire Strategic Health Authority and the UK Chasing the Sun administrator says that the award represents international recognition for the work achieved by two teams of librarians across two continents.

'The original idea was put for-



ward during a visit by a NHS librarian to Australia in late 2001,' says Stuart.

This is the second award won by the project. In May 2004, the ALIA Health Libraries Australia/Swets Australia Professional Envoy Award enabled Sue Rockliff to give a paper on 'Chasing the Sun' at the Canadian Medical Librarians' Conference in St Johns.

'We hope that other countries such as Canada will join the project,' said Sue Rockliff. 'It will enable us to offer around the clock service during the working week.'

University of Canberra courses to close

From 2005, the University of Canberra will no longer be accepting new enrolments into the Graduate Diploma/Master of Library and Information Management. This follows an earlier decision to cease taking new students into Bachelor-level library and information management courses from 2004 and means that, once currently enrolled students have completed their course, the University will no longer offer courses at entry-level to the profession.

Since its institution as the Canberra College of Advanced Education, the University has been actively involved in the education of library and informational professionals — indeed its library school was one of the earliest to be established in Australia — and many graduates of its courses have subsequently taken up positions of leadership in the profession.

Not only will closure of the library school mean that the number and range of information management courses open to potential students will be reduced, it will also impact on library and information agency employers, particularly in Canberra. As the nation's capital, Canberra attracts many government instrumentalities, national institutions, research and other facilities, most of which employ library professionals. Consequently many employers have developed a strong working relationship with the University through involvement in course advisory processes and the practicum offered as part of the course.

The Association has written to the University expressing its regret at the decision to discontinue entry-level library and information management courses. However, at the same time, it has advised that closure of courses does not necessarily have to be permanent, and has indicated that a different delivery model, one example of which is that used by the University of Tasmania, may offer an opportunity to reintroduce courses in the future.

In 1995, the University of Tasmania closed its library school. Subsequently, in 2000, following expressions of concern by employers about meeting future demand in Tasmania for information managers, the University investigated the possibility of once again offering a course in library and information management.

Since 2003, the University of Tasmania has been awarding a Graduate Diploma in Information Management by offering a course which combines suitable units from within its own institution and a package of appropriate library and information units contracted from and provided electronically by Edith Cowan University. The University of Tasmania, local employers and ALIA members all worked together in the development of the course and provide ongoing support to students enrolled in it.