

# NLS2006

**This month, EEI is a group effort, bringing you the views of different participants in NLS2006**

## **Energise>> Enthuse>> Inspire!**

...gives a voice to the new generation of library and information professionals. If you have any suggestions or topics for this column, please contact the column co-ordinators, Kate Davis, [kdavis@nla.gov.au](mailto:kdavis@nla.gov.au), or Naomi Doessel, [nomesd@yahoo.com.au](mailto:nomesd@yahoo.com.au).

### **From the convenors' chair**

Well, we didn't have an actual chair. It's a metaphor.

For our delegates, NLS2006 was two days in December. For us, NLS was two years of work which hasn't quite finished yet.

The most outstanding thing about those two days in December was a feeling of amazement – amazement that this theoretical concept we'd been working on was – well, real. The first moment was seeing the exhibition hire company truck outside the venue: here was something real, they were there because we told them to be there. And if they were there, the exhibitors would come. And then the speakers would come. And then the delegates would come. And guess what happened – they did. Everyone came, and this thing was suddenly real. That was a wonderful feeling.

Oh, we had our problems, sure... the fire alarm that went off in the venue at 7:30 on the morning of the first day, giving us all minor heart attacks. Or the panic that reared its head when we saw the weather on Saturday evening, and wondered what would become of our drinks on the racecourse lawn. When the heavens opened we looked at each other in horror, and then reminded ourselves that if only ten people turn up to the dinner, we'll just make sure those ten have the best dinner ever.

And we both do feel somewhat like we've had our heads in a little NLS sandpit for the last two years, and are only now coming up for air and blinking in the sunlight. Alyson says, "So I'm not only catching up on all those fun things that normal people do (such as having an unplanned weekend once in a while) but also changing the way I manage my own professional development. Like most delegates, I'll be walking away from NLS2006 (when it is finally over for me)

asking 'what did I get from that?' I don't yet have a simple, concise answer to that question, but I'm looking forward to finding one."

Thanks for coming, guys.

*Alyson and Adrienne*

### **Conferences and committees**

#### **NLS2006 from an NLS4 committee member's perspective**

What a learning curve! As well as NLS2006 being my very first ALIA conference, I was attending as a member of the organising committee for the next New Graduates' conference in Melbourne in 2008.

My conference experience as a new graduate was sensational. I was immersed in learning and information opportunities while revelling in being among so many people from my profession. There were new faces to meet, a few familiar faces and, probably the highlight of the conference for me, lots of people attached to tags bearing names I recognised from forums, e-lists and inCite. Electronic communication is wonderful, particularly for librarians from the bush, but nothing beats face-to-face chatting, particularly when you've been communicating with a faceless name for years!

But I had a job to do. As well as soaking up the atmosphere, the sessions and social activities, I was observing; scribbling notes about organisation, from how the tables were arranged to how successful the speakers were. I was on a mission to learn from the 2006 committee.

Fortunately I am blessed with a brain that can run on three channels at once, so watching how the committee handled the tech

nology for the speakers didn't detract from my enjoyment of each session. I could absorb the thought-provoking comments of the Leadership Panel, marvel at their range of experiences, appreciate the brilliance of Adrienne's moderation and still note how well the whole session had been organised and ponder the possibilities of placing peppermints on each table.

My observations have now been recorded and collated for the NLS4 committee. But it is impossible to collate the pleasure and delight I experienced during those two days. My head is still overflowing with information, ideas and impressions. And I am still overcome with awe and admiration when I think of the sheer scope of the organisation involved in presenting such a successful conference, which has set such a high benchmark for NLS4.

*Ruth Barton*

### **NLS2006: Taking the next step...**

As I stepped up to the podium to address a crowd of my professional peers on why librarians should not be politically active, that little voice of doubt sounded in my head, "What are you doing here? You've only been working as a professional for a few months, and you've barely even finished your qualification. You don't know that much about the industry, and the moment you open your mouth you're going to look like an idiot." I ignored it – it was clearly too late to back down – and delivered my speech as planned. I could not have dreamt that it would have been received as well as it was, especially as I'd taken the less popular side of the debate that even I didn't quite agree with. As a new librarian, I had entered the profession thinking that  
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# NLS2006 wrap-up

The ALIA New Librarians' Symposium 2006 had an international feel, with our 280 delegates coming from all states of Australia as well as from overseas countries such as the USA, Qatar, New Zealand and South Africa.

IFLA President Alex Byrne opened the Symposium by reminding us of what happens in the world of libraries beyond our front door. He spoke at length about different countries' national libraries being part of their identity, using, as examples, Norway, Chile and a number of African countries.

This was followed by a fun and entertaining debate about the topic 'Should Librarians be Politically Active?' The debating teams consisted of a mix of new grads and old hands, including Andrew Finegan (who bravely responded to our call for volunteers) and Roxanne Missingham, our next ALIA President. The debate was full of banter and good arguments, with Rob Tucker holding his ALIA membership card aloft and calling us all to arms to defend it – or something!

The concurrent sessions at NLS2006 were highly inspiring – too many to mention each one here, but two of Friday's highlights were Kate Davis giving us a great overview of the characteristics of Generation Y employees and employers, and Rachele, Anna and Catherine getting us all up and singing to demonstrate their 'Rock and Rhyme' methods.

Included in the satchels given to delegates on Friday morning were a paper plate and plastic cup. Although some people suspected we were going really low-budget for lunch, these were actually props for Alan Smith's presentation on 'Networking 101'. Alan gave us new grads some excellent guidance on those unwritten rules of social networking.

Friday's sessions ended with a fantastic plenary session on 'Aspects of Leadership' – the idea behind this session was that we would have industry and new grad leaders discuss what makes a leader, how to lead, and how to build your career without 'leadership' if that's your preference. The session was very ably facilitated by our own Geoffrey Robertson (looking remarkably like Adrienne Harris).



*The NLS 2006 organising committee: it's easy being green*

The State Library of NSW generously hosted the NLS2006 cocktail party, showing off the Mitchell Galleries and providing us with a fantastic venue to practice Alan's networking tips. After speeches and games we sent our delegates into a warm summer night in the city of Sydney.

Our international keynote speaker Joan Frye Williams kicked off the second day, providing insight into how librarians can serve their communities. Joan's time at NLS2006 was achieved with the help of the Information Online Group, and we're very grateful for their support and assistance.

Saturday's concurrent sessions were just as wide reaching as Friday's. Kael Driscoll regaled us all with tales of librarians in popular culture, ranging from comics and action figures to movies and some, ahem, 'romance' novels, and John Chisholm delivered a bouncy paper on becoming a manager before your time.

Christine Bruce rounded off the second day of the Symposium, reminding us of the impact that information literacy can have in people's lives and our responsibility to promote information skills to the wider community.

The dinner for NLS2006 was held at Randwick Racecourse, in what was meant to be a glorious, light and airy trackside marquee, preceded by drinks on the lawn. The heavens had other ideas, dumping what felt like a year's worth of rain on us and our delegates, however spirits were high and the wet meant we had to dry ourselves off with some vigorous dancing – at least that's the excuse some of us used!

Want proof? Have a look at our flickr group at <http://www.flickr.com/groups/nls2006/> and feel free to add to the pool.

*Thanks to all our delegates and supporters, and we look forward to seeing you at the next one!*

*The NLS2006 Organising Committee*

# Yes, Ma'am

## Sessions in readers advisory service

Nancy Pearl, the world-renowned librarian from Seattle, enjoyed her 2005 visit to Australia for the Sydney Writers Festival so much that she wanted to return. Having been offered a role as an entertainer on a Holland America Cruise ship, Nancy took advantage of this opportunity and contacted the State Library of New South Wales to discuss the possibility of a further visit to Australia. Consequently Nancy returned to Sydney in December 2006 (on a cruise ship from Auckland) to conduct a series of readers' advisory workshops. As the visit occurred in the lead-up to Christmas, the workshops were limited to the State Libraries of New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria. While in New South Wales, Nancy also trained public librarians in Dubbo.

Over 1000 public library staff across four states benefited from Nancy's reading experiences. Her session 'Yes M'am: Mood, Appeal and Motivation in providing excellent Readers Advisory Service' outlined new ways to offer great customer service. Nancy said library staff often experienced 'desk paralysis' and humorously demonstrated that reader advisory work is a dialogue between the reader and the staff member. Multiple options for the reader might be considered – some might want to be stretched by their reading, others will seek a more comforta-

ble experience while others will be unaware of their needs. Readers advisory services are definitely not about putting forth personal recommendations rather, it is all about the customer! The concept of a book having four entry doorways – story, character, setting and language – was discussed. Once these doorways are understood, the process of putting the right book in the right hands is simplified. Nancy encouraged library staff to read outside their comfort zone and continually learn from others.

'Keeping Book Clubs Happy and Healthy: Tips and Tricks' was a favourite session, especially with library staff who run book clubs. Much discussion and many questions were generated and it was a pleasure to hear the depth of Nancy's reading knowledge reflected in her responses.

Each state embraced Nancy's visit according to individual training and marketing requirements. In New South Wales, Nancy's sessions built onto the 'Rewarding Reading' training, a program currently being rolled out statewide that has helped revitalise reader advisory services. There was also a sellout event for the public. In South Australia, Nancy was the keynote speaker at the Crawford Awards for Library Innovation, held on the evening prior to a fully booked workshop attended by regional and metropolitan library staff.

The new State Library of Queensland building at South Bank was the venue for the library sector seminar, while a public event was hosted by Brisbane City Council Libraries at the new Brisbane Square library. As a lead-up to the visit, the State Library conducted an online book competition to determine the Top 10 Reads, which were announced by Nancy at the seminar.

In Victoria the sessions were presented by the State Library of Victoria and the Victorian Public Library Network as part of Statewide Public Library Development Projects' professional development seminar program to support Victorian public library staff.

Nancy Pearl's visit was widely supported by the State Libraries, the public library networks, the media and members of the public and proved to be an excellent example of interstate and intrastate co-operation. Many thanks to Ellen Forsyth from the State Library of New South Wales for co-ordinating Nancy's 2006 visit. From what we have heard, Nancy enjoyed this visit so much that she wants to return yet again.

#### Co contributors

State Libraries of New South Wales,  
Queensland, South Australia and Victoria



And everyone wanted a memento... (Image courtesy of State Library of Queensland)

#### Taking the next step...

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I would have to keep my head down for a couple of years and learn my craft according to the procedures and policies that were already laid out for me in the workplace, before I could be taken seriously as a professional. But in two days, the New Librarians' Symposium totally changed this outlook. Through the diverse program there were two strong messages that really struck home to me.

The first was that, as new librarians, our ideas are instrumental to innovation and new directions for the library industry. We

are in a progressive industry that needs to embrace new ideas to succeed. New librarians are in the best position to present these ideas, and we should not be afraid to revolutionise our workplace, whether by being early adopters of new technology, adapting to Web 2.0, implementing new frameworks for information literacy programs, or finding new ways to reach out to the community.

The other message that came through was that we are the future leaders of the industry, and now is the time to start thinking about leadership roles. We need to be adventurous, get outside of our comfort

zones, and develop our skills by taking on responsibilities that might seem to risk being somewhat out of our depth. And 'leadership' doesn't necessarily mean being at the top, but being influential in effecting change in the industry, and creating new vision and direction for our organisations.

The New Librarians' Symposium was an excellent introduction to the LIS community of ALIA. I returned from Sydney inspired by the knowledge that, as a new librarian, it's never too soon to make a difference, or to take a step into the unknown.

Andrew Finegan