

Hear it, see it, do it

ALIA Information Science (SA) held a sell-out event recently to showcase some of the standout new technologies of interest to library staff. Three guest speakers provided a most entertaining and informative afternoon and the hands-on session allowed attendees to experience iPads and other e-readers. The take-away message of the day was to have a go, try things out – play and learn!

Kerrie Smith, from Education Services Australia, spoke about e-books from a schools perspective and her own experience. Gone are the days of having to go to school or travel with a heavy pile of books. Portability has arrived in the form of e-readers and MP3 players to carry all the books and audio-books we need - and these technologies are affordable, which is the key to the current revolution. iPads are replacing textbooks in Australian schools and universities, Kindles are being supplied to children in the third world; the opportunities appear almost limitless. But behind the scenes the device war (screen size, colour or black and white, backlit or not) and the format war (pdf or proprietary format) are continuing and there are still issues for libraries (loan the device or just the content?) and publishers (pricing and contracts) to resolve.

Kerrie also spoke about Second Life – virtual worlds, online meetings, and the benefits of living vicariously through your avatar. This appealing, interesting, and safe environment with a gaming atmosphere allows users to experience what they cannot in real life, through role-playing online. Second Life is becoming an indispensable learning tool in Australian universities and provides a ‘no negative consequences’ environment in conjunction with other real life learning

experiences. The issues for libraries however, include the length of patrons’ computer use, the need for large and frequent software upgrades, the use of lots of bandwidth, and how to responsibly manage it so under 15 year olds can’t access it when they login from home.

Kate Sinclair, from Flinders University, spoke about the emerging technology aspects of the ALIA Access 2010 conference where delegates used a range of technologies to enhance their conference experience – Twitter (tweets worked well in the conference setting), Flickr (a nice way of bringing together a joint experience), blogs, Geotagging, and more. Kate highlighted some particularly interesting papers from the conference which are available on the conference web site at <http://conferences.alia.org.au/access2010/program.html>.

Katie Hannan, from City of Onkaparinga Libraries, spoke about the range of technologies she uses to develop and manage her online life and brand: her own web site, Twitter, Flickr, LinkedIn, delicious, SlideShare, Facebook, Tript, Google Calendar, and more. The future of social media is up to all of us so we need to experiment, play, get on board, and not worry if our favourite apps don’t last forever. The only cautions are to be aware of your digital footprint and be mindful of privacy issues.

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Play and learn!

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