

INVALUABLE FACE TIME FOR EDUCATORS AND RESEARCHERS

On 17–18 June, RMIT hosted Australian Information Education Symposium (AIES) and Research Applications in Information and Library Studies (RAILS9). The main purpose of AIES is to bring together educators from a wide range of information professions to share professional knowledge and teaching practices. RAILS offers a platform to both students and professional researchers in the field of Information and Library sciences to network and showcase the results of their research.

This year, AIES presenters came from Monash University, University of South Australia (UniSA), QUT, University of Ballarat, Charles Sturt University (CSU), and Chisholm Institute of TAFE. Despite their multiple differences, a number of presentations emphasised change as a main theme. Tom Denison of Monash informed the audience that information education at his institution is undergoing an important change with the forthcoming opening of a Master's program in Library Studies. Diane Velasquez and Diana Hodge from UniSA reported on the changes they implemented into Reading Advisory courses and what difference it has made to students. A research group from QUT, represented by Zaana Howard, pointed out that change can be difficult to manage. Their research into educators' attitudes towards blended learning indicated that achieving a balance between online and face-to-face teaching modes currently poses more questions than solutions. Sigrid McCausland of CSU, on the other hand, pushed for change in curriculum to include teaching the specific library advocacy skills so critically needed today.


The second half of the day was dedicated to round table discussion of Australian Qualifications Frameworks. The round

table inspired a vivid debate of pros and cons of the current scheme, the need for more public consultations, and teaching community involvement.

RAILS9 featured twice as many presenters with participants coming from The University of Melbourne, RMIT, QUT, Deakin, UniSA, CSU, Flinders, as well as from University of Sheffield (UK) and University of Texas (Austin, USA). Especially encouraging was the high student participation with five papers presented.

Conference papers covered a wide variety of research topics ranging from health information management, challenges of open access research publishing, studies of "big data" and information literacy, to analysis of job advertisements, social media, and user experience. In the afternoon, Sue Roberts, State Librarian and SLV CEO, gave an inspirational talk on the changes at the State Library, the research behind the changes, and how, based on this research, the library is shifting its focus from collecting and preserving to engagement and expertise oriented services. Another conference highlight included "One minute madness," an experimental format of information delivery where a few volunteers tried to communicate their message to the audience in a snappy, one-minute presentation. Although not all participants were able to finish in a minute, the audience found the experiment informative, entertaining, and worth pursuing in the future.

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