

# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF...

## Thomas Girke, Information Support Manager at CSIRO



CSIRO Black Mountain Library

No two days are ever the same. That's just one of the great things about working at CSIRO Library Services. A research library. A government library. A special library. Very similar to a research intensive university library, but without undergraduate students. The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) is Australia's national science agency. CSIRO has more than 6500 staff located at over 50 sites in every state and territory, and a vision to use science to make a profound and positive impact for the future of Australia and the global community. Some of CSIRO's well known achievements in everyday use today include *Aeroguard*, plastic bank notes, soft contact lenses, *Relenza* flu treatment, and WiFi.

The CSIRO Library can be traced back to the inception of the organisation in 1926 when a librarian was employed in Melbourne to manage a collection of 200 serials. By 1984, CSIRO had established 80 libraries across the country with a print collection of nearly 1.5 million volumes, and over 12 000 subscriptions. The library has a tradition of implementing world leading information services such as *Scientific Serials in Australian Libraries*, *AUSTRALIS*, and the first web-enabled library catalogue in Australia. CSIRO was also the first library in Australia to implement collection agreements for ejournals, with major international science publishers and, in the 1990s, was a pioneer in networking *Current Contents*, *CAB Abstracts*, and CSIRO's Publications List to all

researchers, regardless of their location across Australia.

Today, CSIRO is the largest science library in Australia delivering information services under an enterprise model through a number of major library centres and information service points located around the country. As a member of the library management team, my role is to manage the delivery of library support services for all CSIRO researchers. My work includes acquisition of information resources, resource discovery, managing library finances, as well as facilitating access to resources for CSIRO researchers and the external community through CSIRO's Document Delivery Service. Geographically dispersed, the Information Support team has three functional streams: acquisitions; document delivery; and library systems. Fortunately, the organisation has excellent infrastructure to support online collaboration. It's not unusual for me to have a video conference with interstate colleagues in the morning, and a WebEx session in the afternoon.

Much of my role involves working with publishers and other information resource providers in Australia and overseas. CSIRO now has collection agreements for enterprise access to ejournals and ebooks with all major science and technology publishers, providing desktop access to resources. Last year, we completed a major initiative to extend the depth of our ejournal collection by purchasing major journal archives back to volume 1. This year, we're continuing the project by negotiating with major publishers to purchase ebook archives to expand our ebook collection of over 140 000 online titles. Just as we close negotiation on one major agreement, it's time to start work on another. What's most pleasing is that expanded online access to resources has impacted positively on access to resources, demonstrated through a 35% decrease in inter-library loan requests from CSIRO researchers in 2012. As part of the library's strategic planning, our goal is to provide all information resources in electronic format by 2016. We're already very close to reaching that target, with less than 5% of the library budget spent on print resources currently. Another project I'm

working on presently involves investigation of a replacement for our legacy library management system, and updating the library's discovery tools, which are expensive and labour-intensive to maintain. Our intention is to implement a cloud-based system with user-friendly interfaces for researchers within the next two years, to manage our rapidly growing online collection more easily. It's a major decision and one that we're not taking lightly.

At the same time as CSIRO Library Services is moving to online resources, we're making considerable changes to our extensive print collection. With a specially developed storage facility in Canberra, we're moving low use, uniquely held, and last copy print resources available online to this Document Supply Centre. From here, we're able to provide CSIRO researchers, and the wider research community, with rapid access to resources through our Document Delivery Service. Our excellent turnaround times in delivering resources to researchers are a key output, and an objective we all try hard to exceed. The establishment of the Document Supply Centre has involved extensive evaluation and movement of collections, and we've made excellent progress already with improved access to print resources, many of which were uncatalogued previously.

In order to support high priority services, aligned with CSIRO's strategic directions, many library staff have broadened their role and use their information expertise to support the management of data services. This includes CSIRO's publications repository of over 200 000 records, known as *ePublish*, as well as working in CSIRO's Research Data Service, facilitating access and reuse of data in our new *Data Access Portal* (DAP), which provides access to CSIRO's published research data across a range of disciplines.

As I approach my twelfth year at CSIRO, I can honestly say that I've never had a boring day. The organisation provides a dynamic information aware environment, which changes constantly. Each day brings a variety of different challenges. Fortunately for the library, our information resources are recognised as an essential element of CSIRO's research effort, and an important national resource. I'm fortunate too that I work with a great team of people, all with considerable knowledge and experience of CSIRO, information resources, and services. The organisation also places a high priority on staff development and this has allowed me many professional development opportunities over the years. In the next month, I will participate in CSIRO's intensive Experienced Leaders Program. And not least, I'm fortunate that I've always had a supportive manager and mentor. I'm learning something new all the time, and that's why I look forward to coming to work at CSIRO every day.



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