

13th Annual Conference Sydney, July 1998 Vice President's Review

Following a tradition begun by Trevor Zweck, Philip Harvey gave a brief overview of the Conference at its conclusion on Sunday afternoon. In no way comprehensive, it simply highlights and serves as an aide-memoire.

Peter Bentley from the Christian Research Association spoke to us on Wednesday night. For him the future is going to be electronic, with many of CRA's findings being put on the Web rather than in book form; also journals he edits, including *Lucas* and *National outlook*. It was eye-raising to hear him compliment the ANZTLA statistics as a useful source for his work, done quite unfortunately in the absence of the Statistician, who was ailing with flu on her bed of woe!

On Thursday morning we were given the opposite view about the future of the book by Warren Schirmer and Mark Simpfendorfer of Open Book. The percentage of books likely to be on CD-Rom and Internet is always going to be a small fraction of the total publication output. In fact, the future of the book has never looked better, with the electronic revolution augmenting rather than replacing the classic codex. Other interesting points were put: that publishers have no control over the World Wide Web and are therefore wary of putting work on it.

Jackie Slee from the Central Queensland University Sydney International Campus – a statement in itself – told of her experiences of creating an entirely electronic library. She has come to the position eventually of having to buy books for her library, out of demand. The hardest part for her was to convince the students it was still a library when it had no books! In fact, she questioned the real success of the venture, a salutary warning for us about cautious planning with new technologies.

We then heard Judy Ryan from the Open Training and Education Network at TAFE (OTEN), who talked about ordering on a mind-boggling scale. The sheer number of suppliers they pursue is an example to us that there are more potential suppliers out there than we imagine, especially if we live off Blackwell and BNA as a staple. Proper evaluation of suppliers can be an effective tool for changes, resulting in improved service from suppliers and improved service to users.

Then Margaret Roberts, also from TAFE, gave illustrations of electronic orders that were truly scary in their skimpiness. How many of us would rely on ISBN, author, title, and publisher as the sole information when ordering a book? At the same time that she extolled the 'paperless society', Margaret reminded us that other library staff still wanted "pieces of paper" to confirm the electronic orders that they had to process, just to feel safe.

On Friday morning a group opened up discussion on Distance Education. Margaret McPherson said that the prime responsibility for supporting students remains with the institution, and that the Distance Education library service is not a cheap alternative to in-

house. Meredith Williams eloquently alerted us to the difficulties encountered by the isolated external student. Sue Cox and Anne Morris Bannerman covered the practical considerations at the library end, for example, 'the loneliness of the long distance reference interviewer', and the importance of timeliness in responding to requests, i.e. Now!

That afternoon we were fully informed about industrial issues by Phil Teece of ALIA. Despite persistent troubles positioning and focussing the overheads, his incredible in-depth knowledge of changing work patterns and their relationship to librarianship was invaluable, and a reassurance that we were in the right hands. The NSW Pay Equity Inquiry, comparing librarians and geologists, revealed the serious injustice that has not improved over forty years. We were happy to hear that the Inquiry is before Justice Glynn, a former librarian.

On Saturday morning there was a joint ANZTLA/OPALS (One Person Australian Libraries) session on management issues in a one person library. Toni Silson, Maria Athanasatos, Merrilyn Tandulkar, Tony McCumstie and Catherine Halsall spoke from individual experience. Are we super-heroes or mere mortals? We know conflict and change are an inevitable part of life, so how do we deal with them in the work place? Many useful responses were given to these questions, with the general position being to know your own position and always be prepared to negotiate.

On Saturday night the chief cataloguer of the Joint Theological Library reiterated the time-honoured theme of our cataloguing: AACR2 and LCSH are wonderful systems, almost a miracle of agreement, but that cataloguers will always have to deal with the problems of any rules – anomalies, omissions, contradictions and blind spots. He also warned about the danger to authority maintenance posed by the ready availability of book description on the Internet that is not authority-controlled.

He was presented, as were all the main speakers, with a little green package from the committee. Unwrapped, it was a superb glass box containing seashell chocolates, an original product from the Paddington Market.

This year saw a number of welcome innovations. First, site insights. I personally learnt many things about libraries in the Association of which I would otherwise be ignorant. These snapshots showed, if anything could, the diversity of our libraries, the energy and commitment of our members. Secondly, the trade fair. Never before have we experienced a trade fair on this scale. Does this have something to do with being in Sydney? I know I personally will be carting a great case of catalogues back to Melbourne. Third, we are seeing greater outreach by ANZTLA into the Pacific and Asia, something that is obviously going to grow.

Finally it is necessary to draw attention to the general ambience created by the Committee. Despite their special badges they do not live on a cloud. They have put an enormous amount of thought as well as slog into this conference.

The meals within Moore College have been uniformly excellent, with many commenting in particular on the hearty breakfasts. My own memory is of the unusual mushroom lasagna at Friday lunch. It is also the only university college where I have ever seen the cooks wear French chefs' hats!

Even more so, my memories of the curried pumpkin soup at Sancta Sophia, and that was only the start. The Conference dinner in Sydney has set a new benchmark. Raging fire, splendid food, soothing wine. Marvellous acapella singing in the Sydney style. We saw for the first time the recipient of an ANZTLA award actually being there at the time it was given!

We enjoyed an afternoon of excellent relaxation on the Harbour. This is an integral part of our conferences, as it is the way we get to know each other and build up confidence. Much of the ongoing contact through the year between members is initiated not in sessions but on Harbour cruises.

I am afraid I have overlooked someone and apologise if I have. But lastly, special attention needs to be given to this year's little white clouds – Jocelyn Morris, Kim Robinson, Anne Hocking, Linda Heald – who have done a truly wonderful job for us all and are to be thanked. I wish I could present each one with a little green package!

Philip Harvey

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Luther Seminary

Adelaide

1st – 4th July 1999

Plan to be there!