

Keyed in or Locked out

Vice President's Informal Report of the Association's 21st Annual Conference in Adelaide, 13-16 July 2006

Philip Harvey

This year's conference was held within the palatial Ballroom of St. Mark's College in North Adelaide, South Australia.

A pas de deux by Kate Sergeant and Kathryn Duncan was the opening performance.

Kate Sergeant (University of South Australia) reminded us that electronic resources change shape and are hard to manage. Here are good questions to ask. How much information do you need to include? How much will your users follow, e.g. a pdf file of the same hardcopy version on the shelves? Perhaps she best illustrated the transitional state we are in when she said, I can describe the podcast of a news report on the ABC, not that I have ever seen a podcast myself. E-resources change, which means we have to change the records. Take, for example, changeable content, new URLs, and platform changes. In the old days, once we completed the record it was complete; now records are up for regular revision.

Kathryn Duncan (Trinity College, Melbourne) talked about choices in our cataloguing. We may give access to databases through records or online pages, both carefully maintained. An electronic reserve is kept at Trinity College of pdf files, with records that have access points for everything a cataloguer would like to include. This is a good example of the cataloguer knowing how to read the minds of the students. Kathryn's presentation proved she has been doing a lot of work, even if the size of the online captures meant we couldn't read any of it. The speakers said that e-resources are, variably, a minefield, a moving map, a hairy monster.

Our keynote speaker danced the two-step about the place, catching people by the eye.

*Philip Harvey is the
Vice-President of
ANZTLA and works at
the Carmelite Library in
Melbourne.*

He was, by his own admission, windy, vacuous, and vain. He quoted Ecclesiastes to back up his assertion: habel of habels, all is habel. The same Norman Habel (Adelaide College of Divinity) is also, we were told, the author of the book of Job. His view is that things in the Bible are diverse and dangerous. Is Ecclesiastes a work designed to highlight the danger of 'wisdom'? All is vanity! Without substantiation, Habel asserted that Solomon was the first librarian – something to follow up. The challenge for librarians: of making many books there is no end, but if you are foolish enough to study the hidden ones critically you may become wise.

Habel was equally interested in dangerous books outside the library. If John is taken at his word - 'we know this testimony to be true' – then we are preserving the truth through books like John and Luke. Yet how come they got in but not the Gospels of Thomas or Judas? Norman Habel at this stage even came up with the heretical idea, for Adelaide, that heresies could be as interesting as Sir Donald Bradman. The challenge for librarians: of making many books here is no end, but if you are faithful enough to ban some, the truth you seek may well elude you.

It can be dangerous to have a hermeneutical reading from different perspectives. Habel reminded us that when Jesus read Isaiah to the people it was a timebomb. Lesson: Of making many books there is no end, but if you are courageous enough to read them with the eyes of another you may see yourself as never before.

Friday: Jackhammers at dawn.

Michael Fernandez (E-Library) wheeled out a very messy diagram that could have been the steps for a postmodern ballet.

He then started explaining federated searching. On the internet and networks

there are no standards, everyone creates their own standards. Limitless resources become available. URLs can be stored over prolonged searching. Michael promotes his product 'v-knowledge', which has huge power to provide extra information to the system, filtered of porn and extraneous information. (27% of Google is porn.) From one browser we can launch searches into all sorts of databases, files, and catalogues simultaneously. Always remember, one of the problems with the Web is that it was never created by librarians. Library of Congress is pushing for networking standards for websites of educational institutions. Search and catalogue data, any digital data, is the aim and purpose of federated searching.

Alan Phillips made a song and dance about his product.

Archive CD Books Australia provides difficult-to-use resources and resources hard to find, including the digitising of broken series. It is a sign of the future of preservation and improved access. At the same time, the issue of copyright was left to be sorted out later.

The room looked like a disco in slow motion during the ergonomics session.

Helen Moody (Occupational therapist and Ergonomist) brought along some friends. Fred is a vertebrae; Fred's front faced his back from over-exertion. Is exertion important if we are going to end up like Fred? Posture is important. Move from the hips. The single biggest cause of work injuries is to bend from the back; prefer bending from the hips with one foot in front of the other. Directions on how to shelve a book: stand straight, point that toe out, bend that knee, bend that hip, shelve that book! We learnt such behavioural marvels as, everyone wiggles every three minutes and shuffles every eight minutes.

At the Conservation Department of the

State Library of South Australia, one conservator demonstrated his response to an outbreak of institutional cockroaches – a Mexican hat dance.

Delegates slid surreptitiously from the dark room after being told the acetate film rolls had “vinegar syndrome”, a deadly toxic fume. Meanwhile “a suspected terrorist” from Canberra was being pursued through the Restoration buildings, his ANZTLA conference badge of no authority to a paranoid member of the staff. We saw sound and image and text being reformatted. Preparations for exhibitions vied for attention with a perpetual stream of material needing attention. Lindy Bohrnsen and Peter Zajicek made sure that delegates did not do too much harm to fragile paper exhibits or trip over the recording cables.

Saturday: Pigeon cooing at dawn.

Three archival experts did their own personal dance sequences with the powerpoint projector.

An archive is not a library, an archivist is not a librarian, said Robyn Radford. (Anglican Diocesan Archives, Adelaide) She drew attention to an unanswered question: we may archive materials onto new formats that will last hundreds of years, but will these formats be accessible in ten years? Sue Ryan (Catholic Archdiocesan Archives, Adelaide) told us that archives are preserved because of “their continuing values.” Archivists work with evidence. Trash, or treasure? The speakers wanted to argue that everything is treasure. Original order of donation is essential, to keep their ‘meaning’ in context. Archivists are responsible for maintaining the integrity of the memory, the evidence. David Hilliard (renowned church historian) said trash is a loaded term: almost everything will be treasure to someone. Top-down history has been democratised in the past forty years, with therefore more need for archives. The

most valuable material for historians can often be found outside libraries.

Beth Prior (Adelaide Theological Library) showed the skilful footwork needed to manage a risky manoeuvre.

Risk can be at the micro and macro levels. What is in place in your workplace that mitigates against solving the risk? Treating risks can be a much more complicated business, with its own risks. It is important that risk management have support from the organisation. Being able to include risk management in your daily work is a benefit. But Beth also said that we can never eliminate risk in the library, so need to be always aware of new risks.

In the afternoon three writers showed the rehearsal time it takes to do a pirouette.

Rosanne Hawke believes that the hero becomes “what I am doing in the writing of the book ... the hero is the person I want to be.” Being yourself is a way of getting through your doubts and troubles. Children’s experience needs strong discovered solutions. Christobel Mattingley was forthright that writing is not a hobby, it’s a calling, a gift. And it comes at a cost. You have to do your very best when writing for children. You have to hope, to write for children. Writers never retire. Anne Bartlett read from her book ‘Knitting’. How to write a story: be aware of what is driving the novel. What is the agency? By overcoming crises in the story and identifying the cause inside oneself, the writer can move the work towards a conclusion. She discovered that her theological learning was the main drive, as well as the thing she was skirting around in the writing.

Sunday: Church bells at dawn.

We were led on a long conga dance through the maze of internet services by Kathryn Duncan (Trinity College, Melbourne) and Linda Heald (Morling

College, Sydney).

Definitions of search engines and directories are one thing, the complexities of online travel another. Facts to be aware of: official and unofficial sites, where an unofficial site may have nothing to do with the subject; sponsored links that may push out the topics you are looking for; special search engine directories by country or topic; and the inability of these facilities properly to cluster results by subject.

Linda Heald reports that google (noun, verb) is now in the Oxford English Dictionary. Informative? Yes. Harmless? No. Google's reach is such that it is now a problem for privacy issues, and government and military activity, it can be added. We now live with a generation of googlers – and of course we are all part of that generation, it is not age- or skills-specific. Linda liked Google's whimsical way of managing and presenting itself, e.g. launching new features on April Fools' Day. On the other hand, we cannot afford to be passive consumers of this and other like products. There are social, political and other implications that we as librarians cannot afford to ignore.

That afternoon Tony McCumstie did a presidential march past, which he now describes in his own words.

Practicalities consisted of:

- There was a "Serials group" report by Linda Heald. It seems that not all eligible libraries are being offered the

discounted prices by Sage. Linda has offered to act as intermediary with her contacts at Sage if the individual libraries cannot sort it out. Details of deals being offered by Blackwell and Swets will be posted to the ANZTA-forum. At the end of her report, Linda was presented with a Trevor Zweck award "for her work on behalf of ANZTLA in negotiating with publishers and subscription agencies to secure more equitable pricing for selected print serials for the libraries of the Association". (A certificate has been sent to the ANZTLA Secretary, Rhonda Barry, for her signature. Rhonda will have the certificate framed and then presented to Linda).

- Picking up from where we left off in the AGM, I encouraged Chapters to talk to Wendy Davis about the transfer of documents and records to the ANZTLA Archives. The aim is to develop a set of guidelines that can be used by all chapters to determine what could/should/shouldn't be archived and a schedule for the transfer.
- I raised the matter of the "open access journal on theological librarianship" as proposed by Andrew Keck of ATLA. There was an overwhelming silence when I asked if anyone would be interested in actively following up on the idea with Andrew. It looks like this one (for the time being at least) falls to the Newsletter editors.

