

Conference Summary

by Philip Harvey



The President's Summary of the Twenty-Seventh ANZTLA Conference, held at Sancta Sophia College, University of Sydney, Camperdown, Sydney, New South Wales, from Thursday 12th to Sunday 15th July, 2012.

Due to a prior engagement at an ANZTLA Board meeting your roving reporter could not attend this year's pre-conference Cataloguing Session. Areas of specialisation are always welcome at these sessions and this year the agile Belinda Law (Chinese Theological College Australia, NSW) gave a powerpoint on Chinese character management



“Alex worked for the International Federation of Library Associations, where he says he met the ethics of our profession. He described this as being about access to information, and the flipside of that, freedom of expression.”

in bibliographic records. This was followed by the versatile Helen Greenwood (John Kinder Theological Library, Auckland) who became instant facilitator for a general open seminar on ebook cataloguing, an increasingly common business in many of our libraries.



We met the informative Kate Bunker (Electronic Services, Australian Catholic University) in the Sandpit. The media sandpit, that is. IT’s here, there, everywhere. Or put another way, it’s here, there, and everywhere. A lot of it is free, a lot of it is reused, a lot of it is beta. It is social media: mashed up, creatively shared, group making. There is too much of it, so how do we make it work for us? Libraries need to find a voice, a way of communicating. We need to choose what media to use to communicate most effectively. Kate is a knitter and used knitting sites as an example of how a facsimile community of knitters similar to old-fashioned knitting circles has been developing worldwide. Members share patterns and methods and for those interested here is her favourite site: <https://www.ravelry.com/account/login> We made a new blog together online which we called ‘I Love Knitting’; we can be making blogs in our libraries and at home. Where do we go from here? Try something small scale. Start with something personal. Don’t wait for perfect. Don’t feel alone. You can start small, or alternatively you can sign up for a MOOC: massive open online course.

We are one of the main memory professions. We are memory people, we were told by the inclusive Alex Byrne (State Librarian, State Library of New South Wales). His keynote address described his songline career as he moved from one library to another across the country. Alex reminisced on the early days at University of Technology Sydney, with its cumbersome bibliographical databases and all of the newly discovered magic of talking online in real time with America. He ran the Defence Force Academy Library where Alex negotiated library planning with startled colleagues who would warn that didn’t he know he was working with “trained killers”. Then to the new university in Darwin where he loosened up the place and made people think about what a library is. Also, he learnt about Indigenous culture there which, when it comes to libraries, means building trust. Later he returned to UTS, where he broke up the bureaucratic control of the library. Alex worked for the International Federation of Library Associations, where he says he met the ethics of our profession. He described this as being about access to information, and the flipside of that, freedom of expression. Now at the State Library he is again loosening things up. This is something



“Six values were listed that have guided planning at Macquarie Library: ethical, creative, agile, enquiring, inclusive, excellent.”

he seems to like doing. Alex claimed the collection could stretch from Sydney to the Blue Mountains, two ‘harbour bridges’ added every year. He says he asks people, do you know that the collection is worth more than the Harbour Bridge? Apparently this is how things are measured



in Sydney, though any librarian would know Alex is asking the obvious. Of course the collection is worth more than the bridge. He likes to slip in as well, that the Library holds the plans for the Harbour Bridge.

Next morning we visited the new library at Macquarie University. We saw the reference collection shelved in with the general collection and colour-coded. Is this the way to go? We saw a stack consisting of four floors of steel trays, accessed by machinery, in constant demand. It is Australia’s first library automated storage and retrieval system. The library planned for forty years expansion. However, Maxine Brodie (University Librarian, Macquarie University) does not have an edifice complex. The effusive Maxine talked about some ongoing values of a library. The library is a safe environment, a place where people feel safe. It provides a sense of why people come here. It creates a work environment for everyone, staff and students. What are our values? What do we stand for? Importantly, does our organization support our values? Maxine asked, is a university just a group of buildings with a shared letterhead? We hope not. Six values were listed that have guided planning at Macquarie Library: ethical, creative, agile, enquiring, inclusive, excellent. Maxine raised the question of provenance and how this must be respected and maintained in a technological world. Technology is only a means to an end. We need to be aware of the local needs.

On Friday afternoon at the Catholic Institute of Sydney a tag-team presentation on distance education was given by Julie Willems (Department of Rural and Indigenous Health, Monash University), Siong Ng (Carey Baptist College, Auckland), and Alice Ferguson (Division of Library Services, Charles Sturt University). Distance education overcomes the tyranny of distance. Advantages include less space and no barriers, while disadvantages include IT resource issues and less personal contact with students and instructors. The key issues are flexibility of delivery, isolation, and costs. Distance education students often don’t think they are part of the library, so how do we break down that perception? One exercise in active response was having questions taped under the chairs, but the answers came from the people sitting on the chairs. No one can work

“As if to keep in touch with reality, Ian asked, do you know how many librarians are in jail for infringing copyright? Then in a murmur said, not enough maybe.”

with students 24/7, but we can do what is right and we can be doing things like spreading responsibilities across faculties.

The erudite Angela Kolar (Campion College, NSW) spoke at a session on preservation. Austin Woodbury was an Australian Catholic philosopher in the Thomistic tradition. Angela has been given responsibility for working through and preserving his vast room of papers at the Marist College, which has not been touched since his death over thirty years ago. This work is seen as one sign of a revival of Thomism in Australia. But it is also a reminder to us of the many hidden treasures out there to be discovered, ordered and investigated. At the same session the ever attentive Rose-Lee Power (Avondale College, and everywhere else, it seems) gave a remarkably thorough run-through of preservation techniques. Preservation must be reversible. First we ask, what is valuable and what is worthless? You need an archives policy. Donation forms are critical, try to get copyright transfer, and make sure a declaration is made. Another critical question in preservation is, when do we decide on format shifting? We heard a lot about how to avoid out-gassing. Plastic, wood, foam - every darn thing seems to out-gas. So only use metal shelves and any storage material that does not out-gas. Watch out for those dyes and stains that can seep through surfaces, too - very messy! And here was my favourite instruction from Rose-Lee's list for dealing with mould: "Bag suspect item until you have time to treat it."

Saturday morning early we heard from the very agile Ian McDonald (Special Counsel, Copyright, Simpsons Solicitors & formerly Senior Legal Officer, Australian Copyright Council). Copyright is free and automatic. How much is 'enough' of a copy or a communication of a work? We are often using a 'substantial' part. We are engaged in fair dealing all the time, e.g. photocopying of articles. Ian warily asserted that creative commons is a form of copyright license. It is good to be aware of special provisions for copying, e.g. copying 10% of a text, though in our human way this then invites questions about what is 10% and what is the whole text. We need to skill up on contracts, he said. With license considerations, attention should be paid to the product first, not the license - do you want it? Assess your own needs, which is also a kind of basic rule of libraries generally. And when in doubt, reach for Section 200AB. As if to keep in touch with reality, Ian asked, do you know how many librarians are in jail for infringing copyright? Then in a murmur said, not enough maybe. Ian was joined by Mark Hangartner





“Are cat people more likely to be librarians than dog people? Do we fully appreciate the “clean, pure joy” of completing a perfect catalogue record? Like Ben’s extraordinary polymath, the Russian Nikolai Fedorov, should we know everything in our collections?”

(University of Auckland Library) and Kerrie Stevens (Harvest Bible College, Victoria) for what proved to be a very constructive panel discussion.

Due to rushing around, more Board meetings, and possibly the side effects of dancing half the night to Buddy Holly and Roy Orbison, your reporter was not in attendance for presentations by Berenedeta Raselala (Pacific Regional Seminary Library, Fiji) and Nalini Premadish (Pacific Theological College, Fiji), or Marilyn Gane (Avondale Library, NSW). But word has it that much careful preparation went into these presentations and valuable expert information was exchanged, which is what we have come to expect of the many sessions run by actual delegates to ANZTLA conferences.

Late Sunday morning the remarkable Ben Myers (United Theological College, Sydney) raised all sorts of questions for us about vocation. Are cat people more likely to be librarians than dog people? Do we fully appreciate the “clean, pure joy” of completing a perfect catalogue record? Like Ben’s extraordinary polymath, the Russian Nikolai Fedorov, should we know everything in our collections? Certainly, and like Fedorov, we are in the business of making startling connections on behalf of our users. Catholicity, in the true sense of the word, is our purpose. Ben quoted the great Christian historian Jaroslav Pelikan: “There is nothing so ecumenical as a library.” This is a motto that resonates within our own Association, I would suggest, that helps define its own purposes, culture and ultimate character. Nothing I write here can encapsulate everything that was talked about, which is true for the rest of this report as well, and we are fortunate in being able to read Ben’s paper and many of the others in due course in the 2012



Conference issue of *The ANZTLA EJournal*. Another vocational fact about librarianship proposed by Ben was that we are in the business of outgoogling Google. One couldn’t agree more, this is our job every day, just as it was before Google came on the scene.

The Think Tank was the self-styled name of the New South Wales Conference Committee, members known as TTs for short. The setting of the conference worked in their favour, and they are to be congratulated for handling what was numerically one of the biggest ever ANZTLA conferences. Librarians from all over the region gained immeasurably from the in-depth professional presentations and the congenial collaborative atmosphere enjoyed by one and all at Sancta Sophia College. Furthermore, this is a positive message that they can be taking back to their respective faculty heads and



financial managers. ANZTLA conferences prove to be the best way for us to network, share new knowledge, and affirm our work in this specialist area of librarianship. And this year, for this to be achieved, we have specially to thank the excellent and agile work of the TTs: Marilyn Gane, Julie Olston, Lynn Regan, Elizabeth Webb, and with very special thanks for all her work as Conference Convenor, Jacqui Watson.

*“ANZTLA
conferences prove
to be the best
way for us to
network, share new
knowledge, and
affirm our work in
this specialist area
of librarianship.”*