



## *Specials Conference Update*

Now that 1999 has arrived, the pace of planning toward the Conference is speeding up. The registration brochure is presently being finalised for sending to the printers, and will be available in April's InCite. This task has entailed an enormous amount of coordination of the different responsibilities of each subcommittee.

The Provisional Programme has been finalised, including the pre and post conference workshops. We are delighted at the range of abstracts of papers which have been received and particularly pleased with the focus sessions which have been planned, where delegates can be involved in a more active way in discussion of current issues.

Trade booths have been selling well and we are expecting a stimulating exhibition to accompany the programme. We are always very pleased to receive any suggestions for Exhibitors which may have been overlooked, so please contact **Merrilyn Evans** on the numbers below if you have any ideas.

Two major sponsors have been obtained so far. If you have a suggestion for an organisation which may wish to sponsor the conference, contact **Juliet Scaife**, who will outline the attractive sponsorship packages which are on offer.

A wide variety of tours and other social activities have been planned for before, during and after the conference, both for delegates to attend and for any partners who accompany them.

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## *International Association of Law Libraries (IALL) Conference*

The 18th IALL Course of International Law Librarianship is to be held in Melbourne this year from 12-16 September.

The programme will cover a range of topics including:

### *Indigenous Law*

- Indigenous Title and Courts in Australia (Justice Gray, Federal Court)
- Austlii and Indigenous Materials
- Indigenous Law: the Canadian Position
- New Developments in Indigenous Rights

### *Asian Law and Materials*

- Reflections of an Itinerant Judge in the Asia-Pacific Region (Sir Anthony Mason)
- Asian Law: Issues for Common Law Countries
- Train the Trainer: Issues for Developing Countries
- Building an Asian Law Collection
- Acquisition of Asian Law Materials

### *Conservation of Australian Wildlife*

#### *Australian Law and Librarianship*

- International Commercial Arbitration in Australasia (Sir Daryl Dawson)
- Australian Federalism and the Role of the Governor-General (Professor Cheryl Saunders)
- Australian Legal System and Law Librarianship
- Law Libraries in Australia

For further details see: [www.lib.monash.edu.au/law/iall99/iall.htm](http://www.lib.monash.edu.au/law/iall99/iall.htm)

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## *Information Online and On Disc 99*

Information Online & On Disc 99, held in Sydney from 19-21 January 1999 was very focussed and very serious. Gone was the transitory flamboyance of multi-media presentations seen in the past

It is an apocalyptic time for librarians and publishers. No more speculation about our place in the Internet age - the time is now - and the papers and content of the conference reflected this reality.

Given the take-up of web technology, **Marydee Ojala**, editor of *Database* magazine, in her plenary speech stated convergence for online services such as Lexis was a fact of life. Convergence for librarians means acknowledging the "mutability" of information today. The site you saw yesterday is gone or is different. XML coding challenges our definition of a document.

Opportunities will arise for indexers or "data miners", those able to analyse data and suggest relationships to overcome this mutability of information and access to information. Ms Ojala argued that "fuzzy logic" would gain ground in search engine design because it helps "researchers find things on the periphery of an answer as useful as a definitive answer". "We understand the nuances of quality information, of data structure, and of human thought patterns as they relate to the research process." The intuitive online era Ms Ojala predicted will be marked by software that learns from our searching behaviour, by blended technologies, by collaborative techniques and knowledge creation

The online expertise we developed as masters of the diversity and permeations of Ausinet or Lexis Ms Ojala predicted would be subsumed in what she foresaw as the fourth generation of online - intuitive software that learns from our searching behaviour. Such developments include sites which maps the results of searches in a visual way<sup>1</sup>, question answering systems like Ask Jeeves<sup>2</sup> and ingenious developments such as the Daily Diffis<sup>3</sup> which we can use to track changes to sites such as Austlii.

**Greg Notess**<sup>4</sup> convinced me that Northern Light was the best of the Internet engines on the basis of its aggressive growth and excellent retrieval capability, well above the likes of Lycos which has stagnated relatively. The functionality of the search engines was sharply contrasted with the directory approach of Yahoo outlined by Yahoo! Australia.

It was **Dan Wagner**, DIALOG's Chief Executive, who presented a most lucid explanation of knowledge management. This online vendor has himself embraced the important organisational shift in values from financial to knowledge capital. Leveraging internal knowledge, what makes an organisation tick, galvanised by the gathering momentum of intranet deployment within organisations was the driver. Mr Wagner mirrored **Anne Lipow's** vision (see below) of empowered but frustrated users. His view presents tremendous opportunities for cataloguers cum

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<sup>1</sup> [www.cartia.com](http://www.cartia.com)

<sup>2</sup> [www.askjeeves.com](http://www.askjeeves.com)

<sup>3</sup> [www.dailydiffs.com](http://www.dailydiffs.com)

<sup>4</sup> [www.notess.com](http://www.notess.com)

indexers. The key was in data retrieval, tracking and interpretation to a high indexing standard and structure, underpinned by acute recognition of knowledge flow within an organisation matched to individuals' information profiles.

An amusing but true aside was Westpac's **Mark Veyret** referring to email and the in-tray as containing "white slime" in the context of explaining that his aim was to develop "crafted" knowledge, targeted to customer needs.

Putting a practical face on knowledge management within a library context, the Department of Defence Libraries' case study of their knowledge-based application which captures, stores and indexes both the formal subject knowledge and workflow activities of reference librarians and transforms it into a shared network resource showed a glimpse of the library management system of the future. What was interesting was their two-tiered approach to the reference interview. This system allowed multiple records for each query given the analytical and interpretative realities of reference work. For more information contact **Lee.Williams@hr-m.b-m.defence.gov.au**

This reflected the content of the **Anne Lipow's** paper on reference work in the digital age, which for me was the highlight of the conference. Drawing on anthropological studies Ms Lipow<sup>5</sup> argued that information seekers do not want answers so much as "information therapy". Apple, when researching information seekers' habits for its "intelligent agents" Internet search project, was surprised to find people needed help figuring out what they wanted to know. In the digital age convenience governs information seekers' choice of where to go over the best or best quality information. They do not want the flow blocked in their pursuit of the larger task which is why reference librarians must be visible, especially those serving remote clients at the point of need. Interactive audio/video conferencing was not outside the bounds of future service delivery, Ms Lipow argued. To counteract decline in reference statistics proportionate to end-user Internet use and belief that search engines will replace reference librarians, integration and synchronisation with clients' business away from central service delivery was never more important.

Following this paper I visited the New South Wales Parliamentary Library and was intrigued to find that, having queried the Reference Librarians on the information their clients would value most, given the impending election, the Library's intranet Webmaster had posted maps of the re-drawn electoral boundaries, together with concomitant census data - which was wildly received and aptly demonstrated Lipow's point.

Internet tips and tricks were presented as part of this conference. **John Wright** from the State Library of NSW in 20 minutes did a superb job of encapsulating the world of web graphics. **Tony Barry** successfully debunked any idea that people can be found on the web and **Sandra Davey** presented well the basics of converting formatted documents into web pages.

**Philip Kent's** paper on pricing and paying in the electronic information environment was most useful for those contemplating consortia negotiations with publishers for his discussion of the "Statement of current perspective and preferred practices for the selection and purchase of electronic information" published by the CAUL/CSIRO/CONZUL Electronic Information Resources Committee.

Another valuable perspective on consortia was provided from lessons learnt by the Victorian state wide library consortium Swagger - State Wide Access Group Getting Electronic Resources.<sup>6</sup>

These are the papers I found most useful. In addition, I attended the post-conference seminar, "The Information Professional in the Internet Age" presented by **Dr Donald Hawkins**, President, InfoResources Corporation. This course took a SWAT approach looking at competing information retrieval trends such as the emergence of sites like the IBM Almaden Research Center<sup>7</sup> which traces people's Internet searching behaviour to improve sites or the concept of "data mining" which aims to find patterns within data.

<sup>5</sup> [www.library-solutions.com](http://www.library-solutions.com)

<sup>6</sup> [www.slv.vic.gov.au/slv/swagger](http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/slv/swagger)

<sup>7</sup> [www.almaden.ibm.com/cs/k53/clever.html](http://www.almaden.ibm.com/cs/k53/clever.html)

Against a background of business trends such as downsizing, consortia and "knowledge management" and electronic publishing trends where the physical product and old pricing models are disappearing, information professionals need to hone their grip on new terminology, marketing and negotiating skills, technology, resource knowledge and develop their personal skills. In so doing new careers as webmasters, product reviewers, consultants, thesaurus builders, Internet/intranet cataloguer/classifiers, search engine designers and trainers are starting to emerge. Some 20 participants, we were exhorted in this seminar, in facing the challenges ahead to be adaptable and willing to change, go on the offensive, learn the employer's business, anticipate users' needs, not think we are indispensable, embrace technology and keep up-to-date.

I gleaned much of value from attending Online 99. Selected papers are available from:

[www.csu.edu.au/special/online99/proceedings99](http://www.csu.edu.au/special/online99/proceedings99)

The mood of the conference was very positive and can be encapsulated in the following:

"The job of the information professional is to create and exploit the structure of knowledge".<sup>8</sup>

"Everything frustrating us about the Web today represents job security for information professionals tomorrow".<sup>9</sup>

"Simply retrieving information is not a marketable skill.... Analysis is where information professionals are adding value to the research process.... Are you into analysis?"<sup>10</sup>

### Sue Rigney

Library Manager

Dept of Justice and Attorney-General (Qld)

<sup>8</sup> Kevin Kelly, Keynote Address, *Online World 1997 Conference*

<sup>9</sup> Reva Basch, *Internet Librarian '97*

<sup>10</sup> Sara van der Voort, *Online*, Jan/Feb 1998 at pp 58-60

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