

BIMS – the missing link

Angelina Yeung, ethnic services librarian, Willoughby City Library

The official launch of the Chinese electronic book catalogue (BIMS) was held at Willoughby City Library earlier this year. Willoughby City Library, located in the Lower North Shore of Sydney, has an extensive collection of twelve community languages. The Chinese collection is by far the most popular with 97 123 loans in 1997 from a collection of 7500 items. Previously the collection was catalogued in Romanised transliteration using the Hanyu Pinyin system, which created two major obstacles — one word in Pinyin can represent multiple Chinese characters, and the majority of Chinese readers do not understand the Hanyu Pinyin system. In order to make life easier for the library staff and the user, the idea of providing a Chinese catalogue in original script was developed.

Librarians from all over Sydney showed great interest in BIMS



In 1990, Angelina Yeung, the ethnic services librarian produced a manual Chinese author listing of holdings in Romanised transliteration, with original Chinese script. The list was for public use and was updated annually, however it had the problem of being almost immediately out-of-date due to the frequent additions to the Chinese collection.

In 1996, Willoughby City Library successfully obtained a library development grant from the State government to implement the new electronic Chinese catalogue system developed by Kairos International Pty Ltd (specialists in supplying public libraries with Chinese publications from Hong Kong, Taiwan, China and Singapore), codenamed BIMS. BIMS is a Windows database application specifically de-



Mary Sullivan, the library services manager, gave the welcoming speech at the BIMS launch

signed for libraries for the management of Chinese publications both in English and Chinese.

Library users can now use the system to retrieve bibliographical information from the collection in three ways: by English, to check the translated best sellers; by Pinyin, to check the entire Chinese collection; or by Chinese original script using the PenPower Handwriting Recognition System.

BIMS has been designed with a focus on useability. Function keys are provided in the form of buttons on the screen, and displayed in both English and Chinese. There are nine search functions provided under the On-line Public Access Catalogue. At the heart of the system is a CJK engine, which provides compatibility with the Japanese and Korean languages for future development of electronic catalogues for these collections.

BIMS is an outstanding success story. SBS Television gave the launch Australia-wide publicity with its excellent news item on this initiative at Willoughby. ■

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