

QLD Regional Group meets the challenge



here is no doubt that the library profession has, in many areas, been slow to market its wares.

Promotion of its services to all aspects of Australian life and work is necessary. For this reason, ALIA's North Queensland Regional Group decided, at its Annual Meeting at the end of last year, to select a project under the 'Information for the Nation' banner.

The result was an information/display stand at the Queensland Local Government Association Conference at the Sheraton Casino Hotel in Townsville, 21-24 August 1989, which was attended by nearly 300 delegates from all parts of Queensland. So far as we are aware, this is the first time ALIA has targeted a conference of this nature in Queensland, perhaps even in Australia.

Getting started

The small organising committee comprised Di Vance (Thuringowa Central Library), Inara Bush (Australian Institute of Marine Science) and Pat Kirkman (Corporate Library, Townsville City Council).

Naturally, before we could do any-

thing, the Queensland Local Government Association had to be canvassed. The Secretary of the Association agreed that the idea 'had some merit', and the Group was allocated space in the trade display area of the Sheraton Hotel for the duration of the Conference.

In order to make the stand representative of services available to local government, we invited the State Library of Queensland to demonstrate ORACLE and promote the BRISQ Service to Business and Industry. We also approached Carol Church, the Librarian from the Department of Local Government. The Department, under Carol's direction, is expanding information services to local government in the State, and welcomed the opportunity to join us.

Letters and phone calls flew round the country to gather the necessary information. Display posters were laminated. A large map of Queensland was 'pinned' with libraries to show their distribution in the State — the Brisbane area being somewhat over-supplied, or so we in North Queensland thought!

The local Customer Services Manager of TELECOM was most helpful,

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and arranged free password access to AUSTPAC for us. Free passwords to ABN, AUSTRALIS and OZLINE were also given by the vendors.


Hardware had to be supplied by one of the Conference sponsors. This caused a few headaches initially, as well as a fair bit of extra work for the sponsors, programming AUSTPAC numbers, passwords etc.

On the day

We decided to hold an official opening of the stand and serve refreshments, kindly provided by the State Library. We issued printed invitations to librarians and supporters, and local politicians. Senator Margaret Reynolds, Townsville's Deputy Mayor, and

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 Dr John Trace, Chairman of the State Library Board of Queensland opening the Display Stand.

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Parliament and to generally improve access to information in the public service. The Labor Party was also quite positive, and since the election we have been to see the new Minister and have some grounds for hope that a program for the development of the State Library Service will be initiated.

However, there has been one loss for library services with the new government: the State Librarian was one of the fifty-one-odd (or should I have said about fifty-one) heads of departments or statutory authorities who were directly responsible to Ministers. In the reorganisation of the public service, this number has been greatly reduced to eighteen. The State Library is now part of the Department of Education and the Arts, and the State Librarian's access to the Minister will be via the Departmental Secretary and a new Deputy Secretary (Culture and the Arts).

The Tasmanian Branch is mounting its usual program of activities, and aims to organise a Branch function each month. Speakers this year have included Eric Wainwright (Board of Education), Warwick Cathro (ABN, and resource-sharing seminar arranged in conjunction with ACLIS), Jean Furze (Blackwell's Periodicals) and Joan Staples (librarian and Campaign Organiser for the Green Independents).

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As the dust settles after the elections, Tasmanians spend their time speculating on how long the Accord will last (the old question 'Will you still love me in the morning?') and whether various election promises will be kept (the political version of 'The cheque is in the mail').

Peter Cohen
President


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Alderman Joy Cooper (Townsville/Thuringowa Joint Library Board Chairman) attended the opening. We invited Councillor John Trace of Burdekin Shire, Chairman of the State Library Board, to perform two duties — the opening, and the presentation of the Public Library LIBROS Awards, this year won jointly by Logan City and Redcliffe City. The mayors of the two cities accepted the Awards.

Logan City Library's mascot, Wordsley — who was central to their prize winning promotion entry — was a great hit in his bear suit.

We issued a press release and the local paper published a photo and short article.

The exercise was interesting in many ways. It demonstrated that Local Government in Queensland is not fully aware of services available to it through either local, State or special libraries. Naturally ORACLE, the State Library's on-line information database, was popular, and the presence of State Library personnel gave many delegates the opportunity to discuss specific concerns, as well as see the databases in action.

As a further encouragement to delegates to have a better look at library services, we held a small competition offering two prizes donated by a local book shop and the Thuringowa Library Social Club.

From the very beginning, this was a venture of faith. We had no idea what

kind of response the display would invoke. In the main, it was a consciousness-raising exercise: most delegates spoke highly of the public library service and said they would be mentioning the display to their librarians. It will be interesting to see if this does happen.

The organising committee is grateful to have had the full support of the Group for 4 days, including setting up. Fourteen librarians gave willingly and cheerfully of their time, which proved to us that promotional activities are certainly important to the members of the library profession in Townsville.

Talking information

As well as talking 'information' to conference delegates, it was a good opportunity to listen to what concerns local government in areas far from the main population centres, and how they go about solving their problems.

Problem solving in local government can be a costly exercise, when so many local authorities depend on outside help and advice. If we can prove that the gathering of information from our many sources can not only aid the process in its early stages, but also be cost effective in the long term, then we will have been of service to the local government industry. But before we get to that stage there is a lot of hard work to be done. Let's hope we can meet the challenge!

Pat Kirkman




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