

News on Systems Interconnection

Kerry Webb reports on the Working Group's activity and signals an important information update

THE NATIONAL Library's Working Group on Library Systems Interconnection met last September in Albury. The Group was set up in 1986 and meets around twice a year to monitor developments in standards for linking library systems and to advise the Australian library community on strategies for interworking of library systems. Among the matters discussed at this meeting were three of general interest to Australian libraries—the establishment of a *Standards Australia Committee* on matters related to library automation, a survey of *Electronic Document Delivery* plans, and an *Open Systems Update* to be held prior to the *Information Online and Ondisc Conference* in January.

Standards Committee IT/19 was formed at the suggestion of the Working Group and its first meeting was held in Sydney on 21 October. It is chaired by Neil McLean from Macquarie University and has representatives from the National Library, ALIA, ACLIS, CAUL, CASL and other bodies. The Committee will have a number of responsibilities, but is expected to concentrate on three that were identified in Resolution TE3 from the *Towards Federation 2001* Conference—to monitor developments in relevant standards and protocols in Australia and overseas, to develop standards and protocols in special areas, and to adopt standards and protocols particularly for electronic request and supply of documents.

The Committee will work closely with the Working Group in carrying out these responsibilities, and will rely on feedback from Group members in the development and adoption of relevant standards.

The Survey of Electronic Document Delivery is aimed at developing a preferred model for Australian libraries, taking into account different networks, technologies and systems. A preliminary survey was conducted by Rona Wade of UNILINC and the response from that small sample of libraries is being used to compile the final questionnaire which will be widely disseminated. Any queries about the survey should be directed to Rona on (02) 212 4444.

The Open Systems Update will be held at the Sydney International Hilton from 1.30–5.30 pm on

Monday 18 January 1993. It will feature Clifford Lynch and Jim Michael talking about international developments for linking systems, and a number of Australian speakers discussing how these developments may be incorporated in systems in this country. Clifford Lynch is the Director of Library Automation in the University of California System and Jim Michael is Vice-President (Standards) at DataResearch. Both are

deeply involved in the formulation and implementation of standards in the US, particularly for the Z39.50 standard for intersystem search and retrieval.

The Registration fee for the Update is \$60—make your cheque out to *ALIA Information Science Section* and send it to Kerry Webb at the National Library, Canberra ACT 2600. Enquiries to Kerry on (06) 262 1535. ■

Flexible strategies in the compulsory years

But, Margaret Strickland asks, where is information literacy? where is the school library?

DEVELOPING *Flexible Strategies in the Early Years of Schooling: Purposes and Possibilities*, August 1992, is the fifth paper in the Schools Council *Compulsory Years of Schooling Project*. This paper has been prepared to challenge schools, so that educational programs can be transformed in the early years, i.e., R-Grade 5. Improving the learning outcomes for all students is the goal of such proposed changes.

While encouraging school community members to work collaboratively and cooperatively is most commendable, it is very disappointing that this paper has not dealt more substantively with such ideas. Over many years teacher-librarians have been advocating the demonstrable educational benefits of resource-based learning, in which students can learn from their own direct confrontation with learning resources. The class teacher and teacher-librarian work cooperatively to plan and implement programs, which will assist the students to use the information that they have uncovered. We have teacher-librarians now, who work cooperatively from junior primary/infant school level using resourced-based learning. How much more effective this paper could have been, if it tackled the development of flexible strategies using an established strategy such as resource-based learning!

It is also of concern that this paper does little to enhance creative thought about educating for the information society; to stimulate debate about the most effective ways of teaching

information literacy; or to encourage discussion about the potential role of the teacher/librarian, the school library and the resources therein. While the intentions of the Schools Council in this paper are admirable, the omission of information literacy as a major focus of curriculum detracts from the credibility of the paper. *The National Project on the Quality of Teaching and Learning* would support this contention: 'To be fully prepared to live in an contribute to tomorrow's world children will need to know how to gain access to information and apply it.' *Quality Time*, November 1991.

It is commendable that this paper recognises 'Technology' as an area of concern in schools. The paper recognises that technology is an educational tool, and it recognises that technology can have negative effects. Nevertheless, a lot of space is devoted to discussing technological innovation with only fleeting references to information. Information technology is not clearly differentiated from information literacy, nor is it clearly enunciated that the role of technology is to enhance programs of information literacy. It is simply inappropriate to discuss information literacy under the heading 'Technology'.

Finally, we need to recognise that young children just revel in the variety of resources in a school library. With such a 'captive audience', so keen to learn about how the world goes round and how all those resources can help them sort out such questions, what an opportunity for teachers and schools to grasp! ■