Scholarly communication and the E-library

Peter Judge has attended two significant conferences

Their significance lay not only in what they discussed but in who attended them. The first, held in the Australian Academy of Science's dome in Canberra on 14-16 April, examined *Changes in Scholarly Communication Patterns: Australia and the Electronic Library.* Invited speakers from Australia, the USA and the UK addressed an invited audience that included some of Australia's most distinguished academics and senior librarians—more than 150 participants in total.

The conference, as John Shipp told us, 'was the brainchild of Eric Wainwright, Warren Horton and Colin Steele, further developed at the Joint Academies' Library Committee and intended not only as an educational exercise but as a political opportunity too.' It almost certainly succeeded in this. It was remarkable in that, for perhaps the first time in Australia, academics and librarians contributed on an equal footing to a major discussion on the future of libraries and what this may mean to the processes of scholarship.

The second conference, on *Electronic scholarly communication: the library response,* followed on 17 April in Parliament House in Sydney. It included some of the previous days' speakers along with others. It was an opportunity for the rest of the library community to take part in the debate, and at short notice a hundred of them did so.

In Canberra—Australia and the Electronic Library

The Canberra conference was introduced by Professor Peter Sheehan, President of the Academy of the Social Sciences and Chairman of the Consultative Committee of the Australian Academies. 'Radical new computing architectures will compel us to redefine what is meant by the scholarly leadership of the library community.' he said, 'The whole alignment of the activities and planning of resources in libraries, however, is contingent on having a plan for meeting the challenges which lie ahead. Stakeholder participation is particularly important.'

The Hon Ross Free, Minister for Schools, Vocational Education and Training, formally opened the confer-

ence. He was in no doubt of the importance of what was at stake, and offered $5 million to facilitate the processes of change in libraries.

Dr Peter Lyman, who is simultaneously University Librarian, Dean of Libraries and Head of the Centre for Scholarly Technology at the University of Southern California, gave an overview of the changes in scholarly communication pattern as he saw them. Scholarly publishing seems to be slowing down although data accumulation is still accelerating. Publishing in some fields—business, law, economics, science and technology—continue to increase in both quantity and price, while in fields like the humanities these are decreasing.

Brewster Kahle, the President of Wide Area Information Servers, Thinking Machines Corporation, Massachusetts, presented a concept for a corporate information system for untrained users to search gigabytes of unformatted data residing on distributed servers anywhere on a wide area network, giving the users access to personal, corporate, and published information from a single interface. He explained that the primary goal in building and testing the system was to determine if the technology and infrastructure existed to make end-user searching of unstructured information profitable. He finds that they do exist,

but network technologies are still a limiting cost factor.

Dr Douglas Greenberg, of the American Council of Learned Societies, identified some problems and

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possibilities for the humanist. Electronic information offers unprecedented opportunities for better instruction, better scholarly communication and better access to resourc- ▶

UnCovering the serials

John Cox, MD of B H Blackwell (Oxford), fitted in a pleasant task and marked another significant E-development

John Cox rushed across the ANU campus during a well-timed Conference lunch-break to launch this new current awareness and document delivery service, *UnCover,* in which Blackwell is collaborating with the Colarado Alliance of Research Libraries (CARL). ANU Library now subscribes, and offers access to the university staff via Telnet through the campus network.

UnCover is a database that provides up-to-date access to the contents pages of approximately 13 000 journals (soon to be 20 000). Within 24 hours of

each issue of a journal received by the vendor, tables of contents are entered by CARL into the *UnCover* database.

The database can be searched by keywords to locate titles of articles within journals. Arrangements can be made for the full text of articles, which can be read only in the print form, to be faxed direct to users, who are then charged for that service. Delivery time is usually made within 24 hours. Alternatively, users can request articles of journals not held on campus through the ANU's InterLibrary Loan service with the normal ILL charges. ∎