

Exhibitions
a key element
to public
programs



Dagmar Schmidmaier

*State librarian
State Library of New
South Wales*

I began my career working on the first major serials automation project in Australia at the State Library of New South Wales. It was a fascinating time, pioneering the computerisation of library systems. From this period I learned a valuable lesson, that technology is only a vehicle for services, a tool that helps us to manage better — content is the critical element, and how we make it available to customers is the mark of our success.

I have also worked in the university, government and private sector, holding senior academic and management positions in the field of technology and information systems, management and librarianship. Before becoming state librarian in 1995, I was director of OTEN (Open Training and Education Network), responsible for open learning and distance education in NSW TAFE and the NSW Department of School Education.

My aim is for the library to be known for its high-quality expertise in mediating information needs of clients through expert knowledge of how information is recorded and retrieved; for its strengths and expertise in areas of collecting; as a place which inspires/supports writing and research; as a place to discover and reaffirm who we are/where we have come from; and as a place which organisations and individuals want to support.

The library

The State Library of NSW traces its origins to 1826 with the opening of the Australian Subscription Library and Reading Room. After a number of moves and changes of name the library is now located on Macquarie Street Sydney and comprises the Macquarie Street Wing opened in 1988, and the Mitchell Wing housing the historic Mitchell and Dixson Libraries and Galleries.

The General Reference Library provides information services from an extensive collection of books, journals, reports, CD-ROMs and online database services. Specialist information services in law and health, and the Disability Access Service are also available through the General Reference Library.

The Legal Information Access Centre (LIAC), founded by the State Library and the Law Foundation of NSW to provide the community with access to legal information, opened in 1990 and now includes ten mini LIACs in public libraries throughout New South Wales. The Health Information Service, supported by MBF and the Nurses' Association of NSW, was launched in February 1996 to provide information on all aspects of health, medicine and well-being.

The Mitchell Wing dates from 1910, built from fine Australian building materials. Of particular note are the stained glass windows and the marble mosaic map of Abel Tasman's mid-17th century discoveries. This wing comprises the world-renowned Mitchell and Dixson Libraries which contain books, manuscripts, pictures, maps and relics relating to New South Wales, Australia, the south-west Pacific and Antarctica. A selection of this priceless collections is described in *Treasures of the State Library of New South Wales* (1988) by Anne Robertson.

Mitchell Library staff are participating in projects for the digitisation of selected resources. Whilst much work is to be done, we believe that the Australian Research Collections have much that can be digitised and made available elec-

tronically, enhancing access whilst preserving the originals.

More than four million items make up the library's collections. The library receives New South Wales publications under legal deposit, and comprehensively collects publications of the New South Wales Government. An extensive collection of ephemera is also maintained and includes the first theatre program printed in the colony, to material from the recent Federal election and issues such as the republican debate. A priority this year is 'bikie' ephemera, currently an under-represented demographic in the collection.

Multicultural services provide a unique loan service, primarily to public libraries, of recreational and reference material in forty-seven languages other than English. Consultancy services on meeting the needs of clients whose first language is not English are also available.

The library's world wide web site, at <http://www.slnsw.gov.au/>, provides a guide to the State Library, its role and services. ILANET, the electronic mail and database access service, is also managed by the library. ILANET has over 1200 members who use the network for inter-library loans, accessing Australian and overseas databases, as well as linking to the Internet.

Document Delivery is a key element in the library's client service. In addition to standard interlibrary loan and document delivery services, this service promotes the statewide library network through its relationship with NSW public libraries. Document Delivery is also participating on the State Library's behalf in trials of electronic delivery services, such as REDD and JEDS.

Exhibitions are central to the library's public programs and are the means of displaying the library's content strengths. *Treasure Isle* is an exhibition on show until August 1996, which highlights some of the library's most valuable treasures and reflects the different associations of the island, both the magical pleasures of island

life and the torment experienced on islands adapted as gaols. Other exhibitions have included *Journeys through landscapes: Conrad Martens life and art; Photo documentary, recent images of everyday life*, on show until 28 July 1996, featuring the work of fourteen photographers revealing the society around us; and *The work of art: Australian women writers and artists*. The next major exhibition will be *Antarctic journeys*, on show between September and November 1996 and revealing the library's extensive Antarctica resources.

The Education Service provides professional development activities for teachers, tours for students and other groups, school holiday activities, manages a team of talented and dedicated volunteers, and organises programs such as the national 'Nestlé write around Australia' program and the Sydney writers festival. A recent initiative is *InFocus*, a resource package of information from the library's collections, to support the NSW Higher School Certificate curriculum.

Commercial services include the Technology Access Program providing a range of computer training programs and occasional seminars; the Image Library services provides picture search and copyright clearance, and the reproduction of images from the library's vast collection of pictures; the Library Shop; Conservation Access conserves and restores paper-based items and runs preservation and disaster management workshops; and the Building and Planning Advisory

Service consults on library building design and layout.

Future plans include building on our strengths and consolidating our position as NSW's major public reference and research library. Through continued support for the development of the state-wide public library network, we are aiming to provide people of NSW with a seamless, equitable and easy-to-use library and information service.

This process involves a re-examination of our major services, and forming a better understanding of our clients and how best to satisfy their information needs. I am confident that the State Library of New South Wales can position itself as a place which can provide inspiration, education, information and entertainment through our own rich and varied resources and programs, as well as those available through the Internet and other international networks. This is a challenge we are all embracing. ■



The Legal information access centre — a joint initiative by the library and the Law Foundation of NSW

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