Teaming with academic colleagues

V Nadanasabapathy, university librarian, Murdoch University

Murdoch University admitted its first students in 1975, but the library began collection building and other operations in 1973, under the guidance of the foundation university librarian, George Buick. On opening day the collection numbered about 50 000 items, including motion-pictures, prints, maps, sound recordings, colour slides, microfilms and microfiches. In 1997, the library's collection is in excess of a half-million volumes, and has a staff of sixty-four equivalent full-time employees. Besides the the main library at Murdoch, there are branches at the School of Veterinary Science at Murdoch and at Rockingham. The main library at Murdoch more than doubled in size when a new building was opened in 1993. The branch at Rockingham began operations in February 1996 using the TAFE library. A new building jointly planned and funded by the University, TAFE and the City is under construction. A unified library service for all three client groups will commence in 1998.

Client-focused service
The library was organised along traditional lines until 1984 when a semblance of a team-based structure was introduced. Discipline-based, client-focussed groups were established to proactively offer a range of library services including reference, online information retrieval, collection development, and reader education. Currently the library is divided into three such groups — science; humanities with education and social sciences; and law with economics and commerce. Other library functions are provided by the Bibliographic Services and Lending Services which are largely staffed by personnel who are not required to have professional library qualifications. It is planned to introduce Total Quality Management and further restructure the library in the course of 1997/98 as a wholly team-based, learning organisation.

Electronic developments
The library operates the Innopac integrated library system and provides gateway access to a range of data-bases. Networked access to CD-ROM data bases is also available both from within the library and from general access computer laboratories elsewhere on the campus. More than thirty databases on CD-ROM are also available at stand-alone stations. Plans are in hand to provide networked information services at an Open Learning Centre for off-campus students in the Mandurah campus, forty kilometres due south of Murdoch. Services for the Mandurah campus are part of the university's project to develop innovative delivery of academic programs to the Mandurah campus supported by a grant of $1.14 million from the National Priority (Reserve) Fund.

The library is also the lead-sponsor and host of a project to establish a campus-wide information service.

Forging new partnerships
A recent decision taken by the university to establish a Centre for Learning and Teaching within the library will provide impetus and momentum for the rapid development of library-based multi-media and other innovative educational services based on new technologies. Librarians will team with their academic colleagues and specialists in academic support services to pursue such core activities as instructional design, media/educational development, educational technology, staff development, and improved teaching and learning. ∎

Providing a forum

Diane Costello, executive officer, Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL)

CAUL's focus is on higher education, and within that, the role of its libraries in support of the missions of the universities. The objectives of CAUL are to advance the progress and activities of Australian university libraries; to plan, implement and monitor co-operative activities between the libraries; to provide a forum for information exchange; to encourage participation in debate on relevant developments in higher education and libraries and information services; to foster communication with relevant national committees and organisations.

CAUL's first meeting (as the Conference of Representatives of Australian University Libraries) was held in Melbourne in 1928. Issues discussed at this first meeting included the importance of the library in the university; the status of the librarian; and allocation of university funds to the libraries. To show the variations from, and parallels with, the concerns of that earlier group, the most recent of the biannual meetings of CAUL, held in October 1996, included discussion about professional development; copyright and electronic publications; co-operative Australia-wide provision of electronic databases; sectoral statistics; co-operative development of performance indicators; the Distributed National Collection; the cost of inter-library loans; collaboration with the UK higher education community; and lobbying university administrations and government.

The current president is Alex Byrne (Northern Territory University). The first full-time executive officer was appointed in 1995 to support CAUL's increased range of activities. CAUL's web site <http://www.anu.edu.au/caul/> provides up-to-date information about those activities, as well as a resource for the higher education and library communities. ∎