

Value adding in the profession: a forum

Ian Rogers, Education for Library and Information Services Section

The Education for Library and Information Services Section was delighted with the more than fifty information professionals and para-professionals who attended this forum held at Baillieu Library Seminar Room on 13 September.

Three speakers addressed the forum: Dr Maxine Rochester; Dr Angela Bridgland from Ballieu Library; and Barbara Patton from La Trobe University. Ian Rogers asked those present to think about their own positions as they listened to the guest speakers: what were the opportunities to add value in their organisations? did they have the skills to perform research and related activities?

Dr Maxine Rochester began by speaking about research in Australia and studies she had performed in this area, comparing them to international benchmarks for research publishing and performance.

Maxine noted that governments in Europe are spending big dollars in the information services and sciences area. She felt our government funding of library and information science schools and this sector was way out of step

with the importance being placed on information technology and transfer and dissemination of information by overseas governments.

In her studies Maxine has found little research held in basic journals of librarianship. She suggests we do not have a well-developed sense of publishing our research in Australia. However, universities are changing their policies on staff and orientation and there is a sense of a research culture and agenda beginning to develop.

Maxine feels that as a profession we needed to look to our core competencies and develop a research agenda which is seen as a necessary and vital part of what we are as information professionals.

She asked us to remember: that research dates quickly; be discriminating; encourage mentoring; actively seek funding; and publish, publish, publish.

Dr Angela Bridgland from Baillieu Library noted that there is no tradition of research in libraries and that there is a need to change the culture. She noted three approaches which could be used to get some critical mass:

- forums for sharing ideas and information and completing higher degrees;
- action research for staff — problem solving for grants and resources, getting back-fill by getting these grants; and
- thinking time — by having a quality management agenda and team approach.

Partnerships with academics were beginning to emerge at Baillieu as both academics and service providers needed to build on their strengths to survive in these times. She noted three projects underway with Multimedia courseware authoring and delivery; and History and criminology departments where academics are teaming with the library staff to access grants and create a research synergy in the university.

Barbara Patton from La Trobe University said that research at La Trobe had been issues- and outcomes-driven and those practical applications were funded through their research committee. The benefits included improved budgeting, report writing and team skills from ventures and critical skills and evaluation skill improvements. Barbara noted that not all research would succeed, but the process is important — at La Trobe the concept of honourable failure is allowable. Barbara said that for the research framework to be successful it has to show the benefits to the library.

The message from the forum was: get out of the comfort zone, take risks and develop opportunities with other academics. Make submissions for grants, extend ourselves to realise our potential. Without the extension and development of research skills and higher degrees our profession may see itself confined and shackled to a custodial role. If we want a dynamic, leading role in the 21st century with information as professionals we must align ourselves and help to chart a course for the future as we help to carve it out.

As is usual at these meetings the participants were asked to submit copies of their papers to ELIS:A the official journal of the section available through ALIA head office. If you have additional material you would like to share, send it to Belle Alderman or Trish Milne, ELIS:A Editors, Faculty of Communication, Library and Information Studies, University of Canberra, PO Box 1 Belconnen ACT 2616. ■

Illustrator shares her secrets



Two Year 5 students from the Christian Outreach College with Sharon Dye (yellow top) and teacher-librarian, Suzanne Locantio

The theme of this year's Children's Book Week was 'Put yourself in the picture'. Christian Outreach College in Mansfield Queensland welcomed children's book illustrator Sharon Dye to speak to all the primary grades. Sharon described how she prepares to illustrate a book, and demonstrated her technique — with some help from students.