

Strait to the future

8th Asia Pacific Specials, Health and Law Librarians' conference, 22-26 August 1999, Hobart, Tasmania

The deadline for the 8th Asia Pacific Specials, Health and Law Librarians conference 'Call for papers' is rapidly approaching as this issue of *inCite* goes to press and the program sub-committee faces the pleasant task of drawing up a short-list from the numerous abstracts received. The authors of the papers selected will be notified during February.

During 1998, the conference executive met with our conference organiser, Mures Convention Management, on a monthly basis and the individual sub-committees — Program, Publicity, Social, Trade and Sponsorship — met regularly and worked hard behind the scenes. Our conference themes, the call for papers and trade and sponsorship prospectuses have been posted on the conference website [<http://www.alia.org.au/conferences/strait/>], and the conference has been publicised widely.

The trade exhibition is filling up rapidly and attractive sponsorship deals are being offered in an effort to tempt additional major sponsors. Some novel social events are also being planned.

The following keynote speakers have formally accepted our invitation to attend the conference: Don Chalmers, professor and head of the Law School at the University of Tasmania; Grace Cheng, chief librarian at the Hong Kong Hospital Authority; Karen Coyle, systems analyst with the University of California's online library system; Susan Di Mattia, president of the Special Libraries Association; Judith Siess, owner/publisher of OPL (One-Person Library); and Mickie Voges, as-

sociate professor of Law and director of the Information Center at the Illinois Institute of Technology. Their brief biographical details will soon appear on the conference web-page.

Considerable time, thought and effort has gone into making our conference more interactive which will be evident in the conference program. We want all delegates to participate and feel part of the action.

So put the dates in your diary now and make Hobart your destination in August 1999!

Dr Andie Smithies, conference convenor

Karen Coyle, visionary librarian

Karen Coyle is a librarian with nearly twenty years experience developing computer systems for libraries. She currently works at the University of California in the Library Automation Unit that develops the online access system used by libraries on the university's nine campuses. While active in developing digital libraries, she is outspoken about the effects, both negative and positive, electronic information is having on the social role of libraries. Her book, *Coyle's guide to the information highway*, published by the American Library Association in 1997, describes the effect on libraries of new developments in the areas of public access, copyright and privacy.

Karen has spoken at many conferences and meetings in the United States and in recent times her focus has been on the need to carry the fundamental values of libraries into our future infor-

mation services, which, according to Karen, may or may not be based around the storing of physical objects on shelves. Karen's ideas fit into our sub-theme, 'The vision', as she explores some of the issues that will face us in the future. Issues such as privacy and user education with the advent of online information resources like the internet; the library's obligation in relation to archiving of digital materials; and is information organisation a value-added service, or is it the basic service of libraries?

Karen says, 'When I think about the future I don't wonder if there will be libraries like we know them today, I wonder if information will be collected intelligently; if communities will be well-served in their information needs. I am concerned that we will forget the role that open information access plays in democracy, and that our desire to create efficient markets will over-ride our recognition that privacy allows greater freedom of thought and exploration of ideas. We tend to forget that libraries are not an end in themselves but a means to attain certain of society's goals. If we get clear about those goals then we can work effectively to guide the future of our profession.'

Karen will challenge some of our assumptions about the future of libraries and stimulate our thinking to help us think constructively about that future. To read more of Karen's ideas go to her web page at <http://www.dla.ucop.edu/~kec/index.html>



NEW!

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