

# Impressions of Online

Reports from *Information online and on disc 99* conference and exhibition

Darling Harbour, Tuesday 19 January — and it is all happening. The sun is sparkling across the water on the city towers and the minister has formally opened the conference. Delegates are thronging the conference rooms, the exhibition booths are busy, the web showcase is demonstrating products to interested groups, and the internet lounge, light and spacious with eye-catching pastel-coloured iMacs, is humming with activity.

Our chosen speakers have come together from Australia and New Zealand and beyond, flying in from the United States, England and Africa. After many months of ideas, discussion, planning, negotiations, multitudes of e-mails, and deadlines (what a challenge to make the whole program fall into place!) our vision has come to life. There is a deep sense of satisfaction, and huge relief that once again we had a spectacular Sydney summer evening for the harbour cruise. The rains came on Wednesday — but by then everything was in full swing.

**Enid Roberts, Convenor, Information Online and On Disc 99**

## Impressive internet lounge

One of the most exciting aspects of *Online 99* for many (including yours truly) was the internet lounge with its dazzling array of tutti-frutti iMacs, courtesy of Apple Australia. Apple came through with twenty-three iMacs — released only two weeks before in the United States, and they looked fantastic with the sun streaming through the massive glass walls of the Bayside Room. It was amazing to observe the effect of some coloured plastic on an otherwise dull grey box. The celebrity surfers enjoyed them too!

On a more 'academic' note, however, I think the Internet Hints and Tips sessions were amongst the most popular of the conference — after the keynote sessions of course! Designed to be short practical and interactive sessions where delegates could



Conference delegates enjoy the view, and the multi-coloured iMacs, in the internet lounge

ask questions and raise issues in an informal atmosphere, the two sessions were packed, with people standing in the aisles. Presenters shared their insights on RTF to HTML conversion, web graphics, managing bookmarks, cookies, locating people and, the word on everyone's lips — metadata. The papers and references are now on the website along with links to those participating in the Web Showcase.

The aim of the Showcase was to highlight developments in building sustainable websites, with twelve organisations demonstrated their projects and products, from Connect NSW, the government initiative, to DSTC's metadata toolsets, to Social Change Online's Reachout youth suicide prevention site. Altogether, a fascinating glimpse into the complexities of building large websites.

Read all about it online and catch up on the papers that you missed at <http://www.scu.edu.au/special/online99/>.

**Linda Rouse** ▶

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### ► Big announcements...

The National Library of Australia has a habit of making big announcements at *Online* — in 1997 it was the announcement of the fast-track tender for the Networked Services Project, and this time they held a major briefing on the Digital Services Project. It makes you wonder what they will be doing in 2001. They also spoke about various document delivery initiatives, but I think they have still got a long way to go in explaining just what these new services will do for their users. There were a lot of puzzled looks in the audience in those sessions.

Apart from the conference papers, which were of the usual high standard, two things stood out. The first was the Web showcase in the exhibition where significant Australian developments were featured, with the developers there to talk about what they had done. The second was the internet room, with a sweep of colourful iMacs overlooking the bright and busy Darling Harbour. Maxine Brodie and Linda Rouse did a great job.

*Kerry Webb*

### A key event...

*Online* remains a key event for me. While the quality of the papers inevitably varies, the trade fair seems to go from strength to strength, with more exhibitors and more senior staff from United States or United Kingdom offices making it down to Sydney to give presentations, discuss issues and generally be available. Maybe the opportunity provided by CEIRC's Market Day pulled in more 'players' than usual, but it really made for a very focussed way to catch up with a range of developments, and get answers to a range of questions — all in one go.

The other strength of a conference of this size and popularity was the opportunity it provided to compare notes with colleagues [and fellow consumers] of various database products.

In terms of the papers, I thought several were really useful, including Geoff Payne's on standards [and particularly on the need for compliance of web page design and layout with the disability and discrimination legislation] and Anne Lipow's on virtual reference. Her address was, for me, the best of the conference — combining a presentation style of quiet strength and reassurance, while at the same time managing to deliver a paper full of the direst warnings for the profession.

*Steve Cramond*

## Stop press...

The conference proceedings have received favourable reviews, including the following:

Abstract for online proceedings in *Current Cites* 10(1) (January 1999) ISSN: 1060-2356

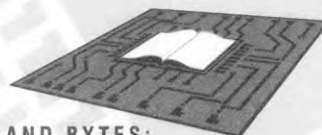
Proceedings of the *Ninth Australasian Information Online & On Disc Conference and Exhibition*, Sydney, 19-21 January 1999 (<http://www.csu.edu.au/special/online99/proceedings99/>).

The proceedings of this conference are a treasure-trove of reports on interesting projects and think-pieces on important topics. Australia is blessed with a cadre of professional librarians on the cutting edge of technological change, and these proceedings exhibit some small part of what they are accomplishing, often with very little attention from the rest of the world. You will also find some presentations from token Americans as well (Anne Lipow, Peter Lyman, Greg Notess, Marydee Ojala, and others).

# Vala 2000

## 10th BIENNIAL CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION

16-18 February, 2000  
Melbourne Convention Centre, Melbourne



### BOOKS AND BYTES: TECHNOLOGIES FOR THE HYBRID LIBRARY

The 10th Biennial Conference and Exhibition of the Victorian Association for Library Automation Inc, will be held at the Melbourne Convention Centre from Wednesday 16th February to Friday 18th February 2000.

The VALA conference is the Australian forum where the use of technology in libraries is discussed. The programme will feature overseas and Australian keynote speakers, plenary and concurrent sessions and an exhibition showcasing a comprehensive range of the latest products from leading suppliers.

## CALL FOR PAPERS

DEADLINE – 28 April, 1999

You are invited to submit abstracts addressing technologies for the hybrid library, including electronic and digital management of information. The deadline for abstract submission is 28 April, 1999. Further detail on possible topics and the procedure for abstract submission is available on the VALA2000 home page at:

<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~vala/conf2000.htm>

**FURTHER INFORMATION:** For further information regarding abstract submission, Sponsorship and Exhibition opportunities or to order your copy of the Main Announcement and Registration brochure please contact:

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