

Australian innovation awarded

The developers of a library returns system, Shute-to-Shelf, have been awarded a Victorian WorkCover 2000 Award for Best Health and Safety System. The Victorian Minister for WorkCover congratulated the joint winners — William Karklins of Wharington International Pty Ltd, John Herring the consultant ergonomist of Work Environment Services Pty Ltd, and Valma Datson, campus librarian, St Albans Campus Library, Victoria University — at the launch of the new system and its associated website.

The minister commended Valma Datson and the Victoria University for their willingness and far sightedness in undertaking the installation and mentioned that the university had rigorously examined the service and operational volume undertaken in the library. This installation had achieved success in reducing repetitive manual handling, which benefits the staff, and ensures that staff can deliver an efficient library service.

In the early 1990s, occupational health and safety organisations, health professionals and librarians identified that library staff were developing work-

related musculo-skeletal disorders and repetitive strain injuries whilst working in libraries. These injuries were diagnosed as being mainly caused by the amount and manner in which materials were being processed, especially during the returns process. There was also a concern that after sustaining injury, librarians were sent back to work in the same environment.

The Shute-to-Shelf Returns System was developed as a collaborative project, receiving a grant from the Occupational Health and Safety Commission (now Victorian WorkCover). Wharington worked with the late Peter Wilson, Australian Services Union occupational health and safety officer, an ergonomist, and the Library Advisory Committees of the Australian Services Union and the National Tertiary Education Union.

The returns system is a combination of products that ensure the streamlined



Minister Robert Cameron with the staff from St Albans Campus Library, Victoria University

movement of returning materials through sorting, processing and shelving. Materials move from the chute to the shelf with the least possible ergonomic impact on the operators. The system endeavours to meet the recommendations as set out by the *Library design guidelines* published by the Australian Services Union in 1992. It reduces the number of steps in processing returns from seven to three, improving productivity and making the returns area a safe and pleasant workplace.

The minister launched the system, and its associated website at the Victoria University St Albans Campus Library. Amongst the guests at the launch was one of only two librarians sitting in an Australian parliament, Judy Maddigan MP; staff from the university; librarians who had participated on the library committees; councillors; representatives from both library unions; and occupational, health and safety representatives.

The minister proved to be adept at wheeling the ergonomic trolley which has been designed with a guiding wheel to facilitate easy-handling and a design configuration that enables an upright walking position for all operators.

The minister was shown how to adjust the Rise&Fall Table to his optimum working height and to move it along a track to each bin. The minister then processed the pre-sorted books as they were deposited, through the chutes into the elevating bins.

For more information about the Shute-to-Shelf Ergonomic Library Returns System go to Wharington's website <http://www.wharington.com.au>. ■

Calling all editors

Applications are called for the position of editor for *Libraries 4 life-long learning*, the TAFE national section newsletter, which is published quarterly. The successful application will be primarily responsible for soliciting material, selecting material according to an agreed criteria, working with contributors to create articles which are accurate and interesting, organising advertising, and providing and distributing edited copy to members.

Knowledge and experience with TAFE Libraries is essential. Good oral and written communication skills are required, with emphasis on liaison and editorial skills and experience. A proven ability to meet deadlines is essential. The editor will be appointed for a two year period and a small honorarium will be negotiated with the successful applicant.

Applications should be forwarded to:

Diana Harrison
TAFE National Section president
c/- RMIT University Library
GPO Box 2476V
Melbourne VIC 3001

For additional information candidates should contact Diana by phone on 03 9925 2573 or e-mail diana.harrison@rmit.edu.au ■