

Providing support and education

Tracy Lane-Hudson, ATSILIRN

ATSILIRN is the trading name for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library and Information Resource Network Inc. The network was established after it was recognised that there was a need for a support and information network for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in libraries. Over time, the scope of the network grew to include people and organisations servicing the information needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. ATSILIRN membership now includes students, individuals and organisations providing information or resource services, with the majority of members from library and archival institutions.

Initially named the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library Resource Network (ATSILIRN), the network was an outcome of a recommendation from the *Gathering and sharing workshop* held at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. In 1995, the name was changed to its present form, including the word 'Information'. The new name reflects better the membership and aims of the network.

ATSILIRN aims to provide support and education for its members and the wider community regarding issues in the information field relating to Indigenous clients, collections and employment.

In keeping with these aims, ATSILIRN has been involved in the development of a number of publications and projects such as:

- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocols for libraries, archives and information services;*
- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander thesaurus;* and
- *Towards Federation 2001: linking Australians and their heritage.*

A current goal for ATSILIRN is to increase its advisory role on Indigenous issues in information services. Some work is being done towards forming working groups of members to further develop this area of ATSILIRN's services.

Other areas for sharing information have been through a newsletter for members, the creation of a website [<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~atsilirn/>],

an e-mail discussion list, and conferences. Some members also attend and present papers for ATSILIRN at various national and international conferences.

An example of the information sharing and the popularity of the *Protocols* amongst ATSILIRN members can be drawn from the dismay and flurry of e-mails across the e-mail discussion list when the link to the *Protocols* had broken on the Northern Territory University's website. Consequently, the link was fixed within a day.

ATSILIRN's website has also changed over time. It was originally hosted on the Northern Territory University's website, and since 1997 has been hosted by VICNET. A goal in recent years, has been to increase ATSILIRN's profile within Australia and overseas. To achieve this goal, ATSILIRN has created flyers for advertising the conference, written articles for magazines and used the internet more widely. More hits were received on the website by increasing the usage of metadata, and changing the design and some contents. Additionally, many e-mail requests for information have been received through the website, from both inside and outside of Australia. Hence, a page on the website has been created to list links to organisations who handle e-mail reference services. There was no shortage of volunteers amongst ATSILIRN members for inclusion on the reference services list.

Another area for information sharing is through the ATSILIRN annual national conference, which is held with the major aim of raising awareness of current issues facing information professionals and current projects. The conference program includes papers from members and guest speakers, workshops and tours. In 2001, the conference will be held in Cairns from 1-2 November.

ATSILIRN membership and conference attendance is open to anyone with an interest in the issues involved in providing information or resource services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

For further details regarding ATSILIRN, its membership or the annual conference contact: Tracey Lane-Hudson, ATSILIRN, PO Box 4252, Kingston ACT 2604, or e-mail tlane@nla.gov.au. ■

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