

# The QULOC story

**B**ULOC, the Brisbane University Libraries Office of Co-operation was established in April 1991 as a joint initiative of the three Brisbane university libraries (Griffith University, Queensland University of Technology, and University of Queensland). The founding mission was to provide a framework for initiating and promoting co-operative ventures between member libraries and to foster collaboration between the libraries and other appropriate information organisations.

Co-operation had long existed between the three Brisbane university libraries. But the impetus for change arrived with tighter economic conditions, the 'information explosion' effect, and new government policies on inter-university collaboration. In response to these demands, BULOC was launched to stimulate joint activities on a larger and more organised scale.

The success of BULOC's operations over its first two years provided the foundation on which a larger group could operate, and in May 1993 BULOC was transformed to QULOC, with six new members — Australian Catholic University, Bond University, the University of Southern Queensland, James Cook University of North Queensland, the University of Central Queensland, and from over the border the University of New England — Northern Rivers. The State Library of Queensland, which has some interests in common with university libraries, joined QULOC with observer status. The University of New England — Northern Rivers subsequently became the Southern Cross University, retaining membership of QULOC. The University of the Sunshine Coast joined in 1996. The University of New England (Armidale) was welcomed into QULOC in 2000. Membership of QULOC involves equal access to all QULOC activities and working parties, as well as an equal financial contribution to the operating costs of the organisation.

At the centre of QULOC is the University Librarians' Committee, initiating programs and setting priorities for the organisation. These directions are implemented by a series of working parties, (co-operative resources, document delivery, information skills, networking, staffing issues, and quality assurance) with members from each institution. Convenors of the working parties as well as their terms of reference are decided by the University Librarians' Committee. A university librarian acts as mentor for each of the working parties.

Underpinning the organisation is the QULOC secretariat. Staffed by an executive officer on a part-time basis, the secretariat is located within the institution of the convener of QULOC. The convenorship rotates on a two-year cycle. The current convener is Janine Schmidt, university librarian, University of Queensland.

QULOC is a voluntary association, with no formal legal identity. Member libraries pay an annual subscription, which is set to cover the running costs of the secretariat. All QULOC functions, seminars, workshops, and training programs are run on a cost-recovery basis. A registration fee of \$44.00 applies to each registration under the QULOC Reciprocal Borrowing Agreement. Some member libraries have chosen to pay this (either wholly or in part) on behalf of all or defined subsets of their clients.

QULOC is currently working to a strategic plan for 2000–2003, developed by the university librarians early in 2000. The plan articulates the vision, purpose and values of the organisation, and recognises the challenges and issues that characterise the tertiary information environment. A set of actions, categorised under the four headings of shared planning and appropriate partnerships, information infrastructure, access, and sharing, then provides a framework for the activities of the various working parties. Performance indicators have been developed by the



(L to R) John McKinlay, university librarian, James Cook University; Taisoo Kim Watson, associate librarian, University of Southern Queensland; Janine Schmidt, university librarian, University of Queensland; Alison Ransome, university librarian, Southern Cross University; Eve Woodberry, university librarian, University of New England; and Heather Gordon, executive director, information Services, University of the Sunshine Coast — proudly holding their QULOC 2001 wine glasses.

working parties. Both the plan and the performance indicators can be seen on the QULOC website, at <http://www.quloc.org.au>.

The website has recently been restructured and extended, to provide a treasure-trove of information about QULOC activities. It has been registered in the .org domain, to remove it from implicit identification through the URL with any one of the QULOC institutions. All surveys and reports from the working parties are available on the website, as well as minutes of meetings, a calendar of meetings, and a news and events record.

Current projects being undertaken by the various working parties include a one day seminar on e-books to be co-hosted by the networking and co-operative resources working parties in September; a workshop for document delivery and lending services staff by the document delivery working party, to showcase various institutional developments such as QUT's Course Materials Database, and Griffith University's Electronic Resources Database; a trial of an EndNote Resource Service by the information skills working party; a survey of and report on experience with Patron Self-Check Units (completed) and a survey and report on experience with network printing contractors (in process) by the networking working party; and management skills training by the staffing issues working party.

QULOC is not engaged in any consortial deals for the licencing of electronic resources. The various libraries participate in CAUL deals as appropriate. A feature of all working party meetings is the institutional report section, during which much valuable information sharing takes place. The co-operative resources working party members use this forum to keep abreast of comparative developments.

QULOC has now been an active feature of the tertiary library environment in Queensland and northern New South Wales for ten years. This longevity was marked recently by the inaugural University Librarians' Forum, at which a number of the librarians shared with a large audience their involvement in information economy issues at the national level, followed by an interactive panel session on the challenges of human resource management in times of change. The occasion was marked by the establishment of the 'Librarians' wine glass database' (— where else?). Each librarian was presented with a different style wine glass (champagne, chianti, chardonnay, riesling, burgundy, cabernet, shiraz) and assured that they could earn a complete set only by returning each year to update an interested audience on their activities. ■