

Many libraries, one resource

Libraries on Queensland's Sunshine Coast are getting together in an exciting venture which could be the starting point for a multi-library network, delivering greater efficiencies whilst unlocking a vast information 'warehouse' for library users across the region.

SunLib is the name chosen for the group which has broken out of traditional boundaries to bring together personnel from public, private, university, TAFE and other special libraries.

Already the group has established working parties to examine key areas of future co-operation and networking.

These include development of a regional events calendar, joint sponsorship and marketing programs, easy access to all library resources from any single access point, staff exchange and shared training, a consortia approach to purchasing, and future sharing of user education programs.

The development of a catalogue portal to all the libraries' resources is one of the most challenging but potentially rewarding objectives. Moves are underway to place links to each SunLib member library on the various library websites. The final objective is to create a full portal where one search accesses all catalogues, delivering information on the full resources of the Sunshine Coast region, what is held where, whether an item is in stock, and enabling a reservation to be made. A regional library directory has been placed on line as the first tentative step towards integrated access to the libraries of the region. The site is hosted by the University of the Sunshine Coast and

can be visited at http://www.usc.edu.au/library/lib_dir/default.htm.

Convenor of the first SunLib meeting, Maroochy Libraries' Lyndall Osborne, said, 'There is a huge amount of work to be done in exploring the feasibility of such a portal and then bringing it all together. If we are successful, however, SunLib will have created an enormously valuable resource for the benefit of the Sunshine Coast community.'

'Our members believe this is the future for libraries if we are to continue to meet customer expectations. The library as information broker is one of our key roles.'

Electronic resources are expected to play a major role in the new approach, but SunLib emphasises that the internet is far from being the sole focus of the group.

With shrinking budgets a fact of life for many libraries, SunLib is keen to explore opportunities for a consortia approach to purchasing, the rationalisation of collection development, and new avenues for the distribution of discarded material.

It also expects to see cost savings as well as other significant benefits in sharing resources in staff development such as customer service training, preservation workshops, time management training and other personal development courses.

The same principle applies to the sharing of programs for customer education. It is envisaged that programs developed by individual SunLib libraries in areas such as the use of online resources, literacy programs and special programs for schools would be offered across the region. Other

programs opened up to a wider user base would include individual libraries' strengths in genealogy or local studies.

The development of a regional events calendar will enable the libraries to adopt a rationalised program of author visits and plan joint promotions for events such as Library and Information Week. They also plan to explore possibilities for joint sponsorship and marketing activities.

Members of SunLib include professional library managers from local government library organisations including Caloundra City Library, Cooloola Shire Library Service, Maroochy Libraries, Noosa Council Library and Caboolture Shire Council Libraries; the Sunshine Coast's school libraries are represented by Matthew Flinders Anglican College; and other members are the libraries of University of the Sunshine Coast, Cooloola Sunshine Institute of TAFE, and Nambour Hospital Library.

SunLib is now drafting a charter and examining its future funding options. It also hopes to encourage other regional communities to follow suit and will be presenting its ideas in a display at the next Australian School Library Association conference.

'Maximising the financial and material resources of all libraries in a regional community and facilitating one-stop access to all catalogues can be of enormous benefit to the community,' added Ms Osborne.

Further information can be obtained by contacting Lyndall Osborne on 07 5475 8955 or e-mail at osbornel@maroochy.qld.gov.au. ■

Clare Burton Memorial Lecture 2001

'Grateful slaves' or 'self-made women': a matter of choice or policy?

Dr Clare Burton was a leading researcher, public sector administrator, academic, consultant and writer on employment equity. After her untimely death in August 1998, the five universities of the Australian Technology Network (ATN) — Curtin University, Queensland University of Technology, RMIT University, University of Technology, Sydney, and University of South Australia — decided to host a series of memorial lectures to honour the significant contribution made by Clare Burton to gender equity and organisational change. This year's lectures will be delivered by Professor Belinda Probert.

Professor Probert's lecture draws on research interviews on identities and experiences of work, gender and citizenship that she has undertaken with working couples from the 1950s, a period of full employment, and the 1990s, a period of uneven employment. It will look at gender culture in Australia and community ambivalence on work-family issues.

Professor Probert is head of the School of Social Science and Planning and Professor of Sociology at RMIT University. She was one of the authors, with P Ewer and K Whiting, of the path-breaking study *Gender pay equity in Australian higher education* (NTEU, 1998). Other research interests include economic restructuring and patterns of employment; women in the labour market; work and family; work and identity. Recent publications include *Work in the new economy: Problems, programs and policy* (with J Lee and R Watts), Centre for Applied Social Research, RMIT, 2000; and *Pressure from all sides: Work and life in the finance sector* (with P Ewer and K Whiting), Finance Sector Union, 2000.

Lectures will be held in Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, Brisbane, Sydney and Canberra. Full details can be found in the events columns of this issue. ■