

River of Opportunities IV

Albury, NSW, 11–12 November 2006

Gemma Siemensma

The fourth River of Opportunities, a joint workshop of the Victorian ALIA Library Technicians Group and the NSW ALIA Library Technicians Group, was held at the Sundowner Hovell Tree Inn, Albury.

The event kicked off early on the Saturday morning with Sue Hutley, Executive Director of ALIA, discussing 'ALIA: its events, plans and people'. This included ALIA's plans for 2007 and the partnerships it is continuing to grow with other external organisations. She was followed by Roxanne Missingham, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Librarian and ALIA Vice-president, who discussed the role of the Parliamentary Library in providing information, analysis and advice for the Parliament. An overview of their on-line news services was given, with emphasis on newspapers and media broadcasts.

After morning tea, Tania Barry of Wyndham Library Service spoke on 'Libraries, literacy and learning at Wyndham'. We discovered how Wyndham promotes early literacy development by visiting kindergartens, family day care sites and maternal child health centres. Pat Whalan and Gaynor Lovatt (all the way from the Northern Territory) then discussed recent overseas trips visiting public libraries in Vancouver, Seattle and Singapore. You had to be there to see the pictures! We then went to the other extreme, when Maggie McCafferty discussed her volunteer experience with the Commission for Truth and Reconciliation library in Dili, East Timor.



Annie Reilly (Deakin University), Deb Parkinson (Deakin University), Karen Williamson (Kingston Information and Library Service) enjoyed afternoon tea at the joint La Trobe University–Wodonga Institute of TAFE library



Shannon Ross (Parliamentary Library), Gemma Siemensma (Ballarat Health Services) ready for the workshop dinner

After lunch we had a quick presentation from our wonderful sponsors, Raeco, before we headed off to the Upper Murray Regional Library's Wodonga branch, and the joint La Trobe University and Wodonga Institute of TAFE library. Having the opportunity to view and tour other libraries is a fantastic way to gain new ideas and we are very appreciative of the staff who willingly showed us around and discussed both the positive aspects and the challenges faced in their libraries. For dinner we headed to the New Albury Hotel where Raeco had generously sponsored the wine!

Sunday morning began with a presentation by Peter McGrath from the State Library of Victoria on 'Digital toys or tools?' He discussed mobile phones, digital cameras, televisions, DVDs plus much more. It was an excellent overview of where libraries have been and where we may be heading! Rachel Johnson from Vision Australia then discussed 'Flying blind: library services for the blind and vision impaired'. It was fascinating to learn that only 3 per cent of published materials are available to the visually impaired – and that one of Vision Australia's missions is to make this 100 per cent.

Sunday's short papers included a talk from Kevin Dudeney, the ALIA National Library Technicians' convener, who discussed the activities of the group including online chats, online paper discussions and the new international e-list LATIN (Library Assistants/Technicians International Network). Wendy Palmer from Macquarie University then discussed stepping out of her comfort zone in audio visual materials and applying for a job after 20 years in the same position. As Wendy said, if she can do it – so can you! To finish, Gail Schmidt discussed the upcoming ALIA National Library and Information Technicians Conference, 9–12 October 2007 at the Grand Hyatt Melbourne, and it was revealed that the conference dinner will be held at the Melbourne Aquarium!

Congratulations to convenors Libby Brackenridge and Clare Bristow for a wonderful weekend. The venue was great, presentations informative and entertaining, and the company fantastic! Another successful River of Opportunity workshop. Well done. So where are we going in 2008?