EEI... ENERGISE, ENTHUSE, INSPIRE

EEI gives a voice to the new generation of library and information professionals. If you have any suggestions or topics for this column, please contact the column co-ordinator Lesa Maclean. maclean.lesa@gmail.com

Conference a smorgasbord for e and d

Carla Daws says it was with excitement and nervous anticipation that she prepared to attend my first conference, ALIA Information Online, at the Conference and Exhibition Centre on Sydney's Darling Harbour, in February this year. What would the conference experience be like? Would the extra expense involved in attending the conference be worthwhile, even though she had received significant financial assistance from ALIA's New Graduate's Committee by winning a free conference registration (as well as financial assistance from her employer)? Would she even be able to find the venue? It turned out that the answers to these questions were 'fantastic', 'definitely' and 'yes, quite easily'. Carla describes the trends that caught her attention.

Carla Daws, intrepid new grad explorer at Online 2011

The Information Online conference comprised three jam-packed days of presenters, keynote speakers and vendors sharing clever, interesting and inventive developments taking place relating to the provision of information online. These were the trends that emerged from the conference for me:

Users are increasingly using mobile devices to access information

A growing number of users want to be able to access online resources via their mobile devices. According to keynote speaker Chris Winter, mobile use is predicted to overtake access via laptops. This trend is apparent in the library sector. Several companies exhibiting at the conference have produced applicatons that enable mobile access to catalogues using a simple search interface, such as LibraryThing's *Library Anywhere* app.

The use of games to educate, inform and encourage participation

Many people play online games. The use of games presents an opportunity for libraries to provide enhanced service delivery to their users. Ellen Forsyth from the State Library of New South Wales discussed how games such as *Second Life* and *World of Warcraft*, can be used to conduct presentations and provide reference services. The Powerhouse Museum has created an interactive game for Smartphones called *China Heart*, which has an intriguing back story that leads users around various sites within Sydney's Chinatown.

EBooks (and ereaders) offer exciting new opportunities

Keynote speaker Michael Mace asserted that we are now at the tipping point at which eBook use will increase exponentially, primarily thanks to the popularity of the iPad. This offers the possibility of developing new formats for information, including magazines and newspapers, beyond simply recreating the print experience and converting it to digital format. Ereader lending is a means for organisations to enhance the use of eBook collections by their users. With the wide variety of devices available on the market, however, deciding which ereader(s) to use presents a challenge. To help guide this decision, Queensland University of Technology has trialled several eBook readers, and presented the findings at Information Online.

Organisations can share their existing online resources in beneficial new ways

Many organisations are sharing their data, enabling users to actively contribute to data collections and create new resources from their data. One example is Libraryhack, a data-sharing initiative of the State Library of Queensland. The Libraryhack website includes datasets from digital collections and convicts transportation records, among others, and allows users to generate new digital content from this data. The MyLanguage portal, a collaboration between seven state and territory libraries, provides online content in several languages to libraries and their users. This resource enables libraries to overcome language barriers in service provision, and to maximise the use of language resources by preventing the siloing of data held by libraries.

Information Online was an inspiring conference, which showed that despite constraints like time and money, it's still possible to implement new ideas. Of course, conferences aren't just about learning. Opportunities for socialising abounded at events such as the welcome cocktail party. Similarly, the first timer's breakfast on the first day of the conference provided a great opportunity to network with other library students and professionals new to the conference experience.

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As Emma Taylor, an *Information Online* presenter remarked, it can be easy to become complacent in your day-to-day activities. Whilst this was mentioned in the context of developing and implementing new initiatives within an organisation, it is also applicable to the area of professional development. Attending events like *Information Online* provides a great opportunity to expand your horizons and be motivated by what others in the online world are doing. Similarly, the upcoming new graduates' conference NLS5 in September will be a great opportunity for new librarians to meet and network with other library professionals, and to discover knowledge that will be invaluable to their careers and professional development. I encourage everyone to attend.

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Carla Daws is a cataloguing librarian at Charles Sturt University and recently celebrated her one-year anniversary of becoming a librarian.

Meet EEI Coordinator, Lesa Maclean at NLS5
Lesa will be presenting at the NLS5 conference in Perth in September. If you would like to meet with Lesa, leave a message at the ALIA stand in the exhibition area. Ideas for columns always welcome!