

QUEENSLAND PUBLIC LIBRARIES' ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE

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Conference summation

Rapporteur

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I thank the organizing committee for what has been a great conference, and for the opportunity to participate in it, and to provide this summation.

The conference theme of *Smart libraries? smarter state* has been completely apposite to the aspiration of Queensland to become the 'smart state'. It is not a theme which would alliterate so well in Tasmania, which aspires to be 'the intelligent island'. *Intelligent libraries? more intelligent state* does not have quite the same impact.

The positive, proactive and optimistic theme of this conference coincides with most of the many conferences in which I have participated during my just completed term of office as president of the Australian Library and Information Association. It compares very favourably with the 'survival' and 'back to the wall' themes of too many of our conferences in the 1980s and 1990s, decades when we should have been selling hope, rather than too often portraying libraries and the profession in crisis.

One of this conference's distinguished keynote speakers, Sue Sutherland, in a paper 'Passion, practice, partnership and politics: marketing the future of public libraries' which will appear in the June 2002 issue of *Australasian public libraries and information services (Aplis)* and is also available at <library.christchurch.org.nz/Bibliofile/2001/Passion.pdf>, asks the question

How can we create the future that will best benefit those we serve? To have any hope of creating this future we need to understand the past.

Sue quotes T.S. Elliot's words that

*Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future
And time future contained in time past*

She observes that the past for libraries is a long and noble one, and that the free local public library is one of the youngest descendents of this tradition.

A reason to celebrate

We have recently completed a year of celebration of the first 100 years of Australia as a federated nation. One of the things we should surely continue celebrating is that Australia is now within the top ten public library nations in terms of accessibility to a multicultural and widespread population, evenness and coordination of provision, quality of resources and services, innovation, usage, and application of technology. It was not always so.

In 1934 Ralph Munn and Ernest Pitt in their famous Carnegie Corporation funded survey, found in place in Australia a decaying system of light fiction dominated institute subscription libraries, used by less than 3% of the population, compared with the 60% of Australians using public libraries today. Their report published in 1935 by ACER under the title *Australian libraries: a survey of conditions and suggestions for their improvement* is now something of a collector's item. If you have a copy? like this one of mine? in your library, cherish it.

Qld libraries in the 1930s

About libraries in Qld, Munn and Pitt were justified in making the following observations, of which I will give you just a flavour now and include in full in the web version of this summation.

'Anyone wishing to carry away a favourable impression of the Public Library of Queensland should never make the mistake of entering it. Its exterior is dignified and pleasing but when the building is once entered almost everything appears wrong. This is true to such an extent that it is impossible to tell the whole truth about this library without seeming to exaggerate its deficiencies.

The interior of the library is a barn like room, poorly lighted, badly in need of painting, and shabby and uninviting in every feature. There are two floors and a basement, each ninety six by fifty feet, but portions of the upper floor are used by the Oxley Memorial Library and the Queensland Government and Mining Journal. Seating accommodation is 120. The librarian's office is so small that when he has more than one visitor they must sit in tandem formation.

The library, established in 1896, was formerly under a board of trustees, but it is now administered directly as a division of the Chief Secretary's office.

It is free to the public for reference purposes, but it maintains no lending facilities for either city or country borrowers. Establishment of a country service has been considered, but has not been adopted because of the expense, although every other mainland state supports this service.

Although the library is nearly forty years old it has accumulated only 37,000 books. About half of them are freely available on open shelves. The collection is reported to comprise 95 per cent nonfiction, but a large part of it is out of date and many sections are weak. Although Queensland is a great agricultural state, there are not more than a dozen shelves of books on all branches of this subject. The technical section is entirely inadequate. The bulk of the books are in poor physical condition and present a shabby appearance. In order to preserve some new books from use, the librarian has placed them in reserve on the upper floor where they are

not available to casual readers. From the viewpoint of library service, these newer and more important books should be put into use. 'Reserve books' should be limited to those of the most costly type, those difficult of replacement, or likely to be mutilated.

The aim of the librarian to develop a collection of Australiana is a commendable one. The policy of keeping it from public use by placing the section on Australian poetry in the librarian's office, however, is calculated to defeat the main object for which this public institution was created.

The entire book collection shows every evidence of financial starvation. During 1932-3 only thirty books at a cost of £10 were purchased. This sounds more like the report of a private citizen's home library than that of the library of a great state of nearly one million people. In 1931-2 the book expenditures were £54. The librarian reports that 'during the last few years the library has suffered a great reduction in finances owing to the depression, which has called for the exercise of rigid economy.' It is entirely clear, however, that the library was being starved even in prosperous times.

Although the library is a state institution it has no facilities whatever for sending books or giving information to those who live in the country. It serves the city of Brisbane, and any other residents of the state who can come personally to it.

The service is far from satisfactory. The catalogue does not include sufficient subject entries. Instead of placing the catalogue in the reading room where it would be immediately available to all, it is kept in the librarian's office and is seldom used by the public. Lack of funds has prevented the acquisition of standard periodical indexes which are essential to good reference work.

The periodical list includes some good titles, but the protecting covers are too shabby to invite use by discriminating readers.

It is a pleasure to report that the Dewey system of classification is used.

The staff of the library is quite inadequate to carry out its functions efficiently, and any increased vote for books and periodicals and lending facilities must be accompanied by an increase both in the number and the calibre of the staff. The necessity for the employment of a trained staff has unfortunately not been recognised, as it has in most of the other states. There are no qualifications required for admission or promotion, and no member of the present staff has had a university education. The staff consists of seven including the bookbinder and the errand boy. It is imperative that a trained officer be obtained from one of the other states, or that a young and enthusiastic officer be sent from Queensland to receive a course of training abroad, or, by arrangement with the Sydney and Melbourne public libraries, from one of those institutions. The experience and knowledge of the present librarian makes him the natural head of the library until his retirement, but it should be understood that when that event occurs, the new trainee will replace him as the officer in charge. Unless such an understanding is given, it is feared that no competent applicant will be found and a librarian without ambition would be useless. He should be a graduate of a university. Adequate library training is, however, the standard upon which his usefulness in directing the library service of the state should be judged. The present librarian should be given more dignified quarters, and the cubby-hole so vacated could then be enlarged to make it suitable for an assistant.

This chapter contains suggestions for the absorption of this library by a combined state-university library: Chapter IX outlines an alternative plan for its development as a state-city library. If neither plan is adopted and this library continues as an independent one, it should at least be placed under the control of a board of trustees and not left as the Cinderella of the Chief Secretary's office. It would then have a group of influential and interested citizens who might force a more liberal treatment from the government.

The board of trustees might take one of two forms

- 1 A board nominated by the government, with recommendatory powers for filling of vacancies, whose recommendations should

be ignored only under extraordinary circumstances. Such a board should of course be constituted in the first instance only after careful consideration

- 2 A board representing institutional (especially educational) interests as in the case of the Public Library of South Australia

Political appointments should be ruled out from the beginning.

The low standard of the Public Library of Queensland is probably due to the want of recognition of the library as a factor in the educational development of the state. It apparently has no relations with any other bodies, even the local school of arts. It does not serve as an international exchange bureau, like its sister libraries, and is not even a copyright depository for publications issued in the state. Its reorganization should be undertaken without delay, and a reasonable proportion of the nourishment which has been withheld by the state from its starved body should be made available at once. Only by these means will it be able to recover from its present state of inanition and decay.

Brisbane School of Arts

This organization was founded in 1849 and has a city of 300,000 inhabitants from which to draw its members, yet the present number of subscribers is only 2,335, less than one per cent of the population. Its annual issue of books is less than one-tenth that of free municipal libraries in England and American cities of like size.

The librarian and committee are awake to the need of providing books of educational and cultural value, but its book collection shows a heavy preponderance of fiction, and issues of fiction comprise eighty per cent of the total. Reference facilities are entirely inadequate, and only a gesture is made toward service to children.

These criticisms are not directed so much towards the Brisbane School of Arts in particular, as to the fundamental fallacy of assuming that any school of arts, or any similar organization, can fully take the place of a free municipal library in a large city. Within these limitations, the Brisbane School of Arts is operated intelligently but without much success.

Workers' Educational Association Library

The Workers' Educational Association has taken advantage of Brisbane's poor library facilities, and is operating a small circulating library

which is open to the general public of the metropolis. Its fees are somewhat lower than those of the school of arts and it has enrolled 713 members within a short time.

The W. E. A. library contains only 8,000 volumes, but it is notable for its high standard of book selection. Its members are of the student type and the demand is chiefly for high grade fiction, (drama, poetry) and general literature. Economics, sociology, and psychology are among the subjects most frequently requested. Its service is precisely that which would be given to many more people by a rate-supported municipal library.

It was not possible to visit towns north of Brisbane, but from answers to the questionnaires it appears that the libraries are small and do not differ greatly from those in New South Wales.

Only one of the thirty-six libraries which replied to the questionnaire is free to the public for lending. It is a library of only 860 volumes and with an annual income of £17, so its effect in the state is negligible. Only six of the thirty-six libraries allow non-subscribers to use the collection for reference purposes. No library receives any grant whatever from its municipality. The total expenditures of thirty-one of these libraries is £5,834, an average of £118. The expenditure of the median library is £88.

It is thus apparent that a subscription library in the form of a school of arts or institute is the prevailing type, and that they are not sufficiently strong to serve their communities properly.

The Bush Book Club of Queensland provides, as far as its scanty resources will permit, general literature for dwellers in the bush districts who live beyond the reach of any school of arts library. It is entirely a voluntary organization, its receipts coming from membership fees of 2/6, an annual grant of £32 from the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute, and donations of books. Books are sent to readers who pay an annual subscription of 2/6. Brisbane, Townsville and Ipswich are the three centres of distribution. Over 2,000 families are supplied yearly with more than 25,000 volumes. Children's books are also sent to isolated bush schools.

The Playground Association of Queensland is apparently the only body which caters for the reading needs of Queensland children. Libraries are established at each of the three metropolitan playgrounds at Paddington, Valley, and Spring Hill. The Association, which was founded in

1920, is controlled by a committee of twelve. For the year 1932-3, it received a subsidy of £500 from the Brisbane City Council and £180 from the Walter and Eliza Hall Trust, its total receipts amounting to £1,058. Only a small portion of its funds, however, is devoted to library purposes. There are only nine hundred books in the three libraries, but over three hundred were added last year. Books are lent out, and there is accommodation for nearly one hundred readers.

A Suggested plan of development for Queensland

Municipal, state and university library services are all needed in Brisbane. There is no municipal library of any kind, the state library is small, poorly organized and entirely lacking in country services, while the university library is relatively new and greatly in need of development. Thus every branch of library service in Brisbane must be built almost from the beginning.

To avoid such a drain upon the public purse as would result from developing three separate libraries, a way should be found to combine two of the three necessary functions.

One way to accomplish this is to have the state and city cooperate in developing a combination state-city service, using the Public Library of Queensland as the nucleus of the reference department. This plan is outlined in Chapter IX and is recommended to the other states because their state libraries are large and important. In Queensland, however, the state library is so small and poor that it might well be absorbed by any other library which would develop the functions it now so inadequately fills, that of providing reference and reading room facilities for residents of the city of Brisbane only.

Combining state and city interests in one capital city library as recommended in Chapter IX does bring certain difficulties of administration. These can be avoided in Queensland by centralizing all of the state's interests at the university, leaving the city of Brisbane to develop its own municipal library. The state will thus avoid the building up of two large reference libraries in the same city, each using money from the same source to duplicate facilities. The present Public Library of Queensland might be broken up, the university taking over the valuable newspaper and periodical files, other historical documents, and any of the reference books which are lacking in its own collection. From the balance of the library the city of Brisbane might secure books which would give it a start toward a reference department.

The plan would be developed as follows

1 *Municipal Library*

The city would establish and maintain a rate-supported library which would offer free lending services to adults and children through a central library and branches in the suburbs. In its central library it would provide enough reference material to satisfy the ordinary demands of students and general inquirers, but it should not build up expensive sets or historical collections.

The Brisbane School of Arts might be absorbed, although it should be understood that its book collection is of little value. It represents the accumulation through many years of the more ephemeral type of book. The city of Brisbane might take over the building of the Public Library of Queensland, provided its radical alteration and enlargement are practicable.

2 *State-University Library*

Besides serving faculties and students in the usual way, this library would maintain certain state wide functions as follows: (a) The book collection should be the largest and most important in the state and should be freely open to all inquirers throughout the year, including all university holidays. (b) The collections must be centralized, with no departmental libraries except perhaps in law and medicine. (c) A system of inter-library loans should be arranged under which expensive and unusual books can be supplied. (d) The historical literature of Queensland should be collected intensively and this library should be given the copyright privilege of receiving one copy of every Queensland publication. (e) A system of library extension which will operate throughout the state and include all the functions listed in Chapter IX should be developed in a separate department.

Although this suggestion for the concentration of all the state's library activities at the university runs counter to both present and recommended practice in other states, it appears to be well adapted to Queensland's peculiar position. The danger in the plan lies in the possibility that state extension might be sacrificed in favour of university needs. This can, however, be safeguarded by a properly balanced governing board and separate budgetary allotments. Universities are usually keen to extend their influence throughout their state and become a leading factor in its intellectual life. Queensland has reason to give its university this opportunity.

The Oxley Memorial and the Historical Society libraries should be combined to form the nucleus of a Queensland historical section in the state-university library. Operated by volunteers and with almost no funds, these libraries will be of small account as long as they remain independent.

The Royal Society now accepts space from the university. Its library should be incorporated in the university collections.

It is unfortunate that the libraries of the Royal Society and Queensland Museum so largely overlap. The museum staff will always require certain books for laboratory use but a general scientific library for public use should not be built up if the state, city, or university takes over this function. In the meantime the museum administration deserves credit for attempting a service which no other agency fills.

Attention is also directed to the discussion of parliamentary libraries in Chapter VI. The Queensland Parliamentary Library has large collections of general literature which are rarely, if ever, used. If transferred to the university they would give real service.'

It is interesting that the situation in Queensland was at a level where Ralph Munn and Ernest Pitt suggested what would have been Australia's first joint-use library, but desperate situations called for unusual responses. Queensland *was* a library basket-case, arguably the worst in an Australia which Munn and Pitt concluded as a whole

... was better provided with local libraries in the 1880s than it is today...It is pathetic to observe the pride and complacency with which local committees exhibit wretched little institutions which have long since become cemeteries of old and forgotten books. That the public library is an agency for popular education and culture, continuing the work of the schools and therefore deserving liberal public support, is a conception which is not yet accepted by the majority of officials or ratepayers.

By the time of his 1946 survey of Australian libraries City of Westminster Librarian Lionel McColvin found little progress, and he identified a particular challenge as service to rural areas. With Churchillian rhetoric and a brilliant analogy he asserted that

Nowhere else in the English speaking world will books have to be taken so far for so few? and nowhere will they mean so much. But it must be done and it can be done. All that is needed is a book-distributing scheme as efficient as, say the beer-distributing organisation.

At a time when quite large areas of rural USA still have no, or poor, public library service, it is one of the under recognised achievements of Australia that through public libraries, rural school housed public libraries, other joint use libraries, mobile libraries and outreach services, virtually every Australian in our vast island continent now has free and fast access to the total resources of their state or territory's public library system, and beyond. They also have internet access in the overwhelming majority of public and joint use libraries. Much remains to be done in the social inclusion, resources, buildings and particularly professional staffing, context but much progress has indeed been made in a short time.

McColvin, in his 1956 book *A chance to read: public libraries in the world today*, identified the world's top public library nations as the US, UK, Denmark and New Zealand. Australia was nowhere, and as late as the 1970s? comfortably within the lifetime of most of us here today? it did not deserve to be ranked. Public library coverage and development in South Australia and Queensland, in particular, was still very poor.

Consider, for example, that Australia's largest single local authority, the 900,000 population City of Brisbane in the 1980s had only a third rate subscription system? a basic book-loan provider? which employed no professional librarians and was used by less than 20% of the community. It is really only in the last decade or so that it has become one of Australia's most dynamic services? a real partnership achievement by progressive elected members and administrators, and effective librarians. The positives of Australian public library development in the last 30 years thus far outweigh the inevitable negatives.

At the time of Australia's federation in 1901 there were less than 40 free rate-supported public libraries, most of them in Victoria. However at the 1900 Adelaide conference of the Library Association of Australasia, its president Sir Samuel Way, expressed his confidence that his successor in 100 years time would be able to take pride in congratulating members 'on the fact that the public library system was quite abreast of the public library systems in America, in England, or in any other part of the world', Sir Samuel was to prove right.

We should indeed now take pride that the Australian public library system is quite abreast of those of other developed countries. Its 1694 service points and mobiles reach 99% of the population, are used by 60% of them, and all for a cost of only 6c per Australia per day? in total, at around \$500 million pa, less than the annual budget of just one large Australian university. *The credit is, of course, yours in part, whether you are elected members, administrators, library staff, educators, or library vendors.* That achievement is also due to those who, from the 1930s on, to use Lionel McColvin's words 'led, fought, and persisted' in the public library cause.

It is against that quite recent, and largely unknown? even within the profession and certainly by the laity? background and history that this conference has proceeded.

Yet, as was observed in my address *Better library services for Australians won't just happen* (available at www.library.unisa.edu.au/papers/papers.htm#ab) on 24 October 2001 to the ALIA SEQ Public Libraries advocacy seminar.

The reality is that it is not the over nine out of every ten Australians who value public libraries, and it is not the 60% who use them regularly, who will fight for better public libraries. Political insight, leadership, and clout is needed, such as that of Chicago Mayor Richard Daley who, when interviewed about his strong support for the revitalisation of Chicago's public library system, commented

Libraries and schools are on a par with each other in terms of what we are trying to accomplish? which is to better educate society. But the library scope extends even further than that of the schools...A library is an innovator and should play an integral and active role in that effort in every community.

In the paper I gave in Sydney last week at the national Friends of Libraries Australia (FOLA) conference (*Essential connections: schools, parents and public libraries* www.library.unisa.edu.au/papers/essconnect.htm) I commented 'What a difference it would make to public library development in Australia if every mayor of every local authority thought and acted like Mayor Daley'.

However we are fortunate that there are increasing numbers of enlightened and effective people in local government who recognise their libraries as by far the most heavily used and appreciated provision of local government, and recognise the high return in proper investment in them.

One such local government representative is Cr Jan Grew, Chair of the Health, Cultural and Community Safety Committee of the Gold Coast City Council, who took time out from her busy schedule to open the conference yesterday and to attend several sessions. She spoke in her address about the

- ?? importance of libraries as the public face of the local authority
- ?? the high level of professionalism of library staff
- ?? proposed Sunday opening for Gold Coast libraries
- ?? 2,500 people a week are joining Gold Coast libraries
- ?? the informative and challenging program we have experienced

Cr Grew also noted that 'It is a testament to our library service that we are not phased by change, we welcome it, revel in it and embrace it. Libraries are mastering the art of greater change'. She mentioned, too, a unique characteristic of the Gold Coast Libraries staff to which I will return at the end of this summation.

Her words were complemented very well by Gold Coast CEO Paul Stevens who told us about a review's wakeup call to the Council about its below-standard libraries and its 10 year strategy for better libraries to make them leading edge contributors to the Gold Coast as an 'innovation city' through

- ?? improved staffing
- ?? new buildings
- ?? better technology
- ?? more electronic resources
- ?? effective marketing

What impressed me in particular was Paul's appreciation of the need for this significant achievement in an equity context, and his statement that 'Great libraries make great states'.

In the worldwide renaissance of interest and investment in the reality and potential of the local public library, one country stands out for its rapid achievement since 1996. In her keynote

address, sponsored by Sanderson Computers, Ngian Lek Choh, Senior Director Library Services, National Library Board, Singapore, spoke about *Transforming the Singapore public libraries*. Issues she raised included

- ?? different approaches for different users
- ?? determining the right location and space
- ?? the benefits of libraries in town centre shopping centres
- ?? how to bring libraries to the people
- ?? the possibilities of creating value and a new experience within a small space
- ?? using innovative technology for faster service
- ?? attention to detail
- ?? multimedia services to the home
- ?? changing how we bring things alive
- ?? e-training for the community
- ?? libraries are more popular than movies

At the Monday morning tea sponsored by Kinetica, Eric Finger AO, Chair of the Library Board of Qld opened the conference exhibition with some well-chosen words, including an astute observation about the dynamic interaction between libraries and vendors and how much vendors, like libraries, are responding to the challenge of change? something we tend not to think about.

Information literacy has developed as a major educational and societal issue during the last decade, something which is described in full in a paper I gave in South Africa recently *Growing the community of the informed: information literacy? a global issue* (available at www.library.unisa.edu.au/papers/papers.htm#ab).

This is because all of the free flow of information and digital connectivity in the world is useless unless people recognise their need for information, and have the capacity to identify, access, evaluate and apply the needed information? in other words are information literate and have learned how to learn.

I was therefore delighted that at the *Smart issue* session *Information literacy, leadership and lifelong learning* we had Prue Mercer from the State Library of Victoria to convey so well why information literacy is becoming a real issue for public libraries, as well as for educational and other libraries.

Prue highlighted

- ?? how much information is now digital? 93%
- ?? how much web information can be misleading, using cancer information as her example
- ?? informed decisions make for a better life
- ?? myths about information literacy
- ?? lifelong learning is about what people can do by themselves, where informal learning is more important than formal
- ?? a 'smart' role for public libraries requires their attention to the issue of information literacy
- ?? public libraries should take a marketing approach to the issue
- ?? public library managers should take a leadership role, and take their teams with them
- ?? major developments in Australia, such as the *Information literacy standards*, the proposed national forum, and the Australian and NZ Institute for Information Literacy

In her complementary session to Prue's, Sharan Harvey from the City of Brisbane took an innovative and dynamic approach to getting her audience to

- ?? think about what they are doing in IL
- ?? identify their library's latest or most successful IL program
- ?? put forward ideas for a project and partners in it

It will be interesting to see the ideas coming out of the data collected by Sharan.

Due to my chairing of the information literacy session I was unable to participate in the concurrent session on marketing to hear Damien Tyquin from the State Library of Victoria talk about

- ?? strategies used to deliver a statewide marketing campaign to promote Victoria's public libraries
- ?? brand management, partnerships and maximum impact for minimum outlay

Damien was followed by Jane Cowell from Caboolture Library Service who spoke about marketing as something which equals something happening, and

- ?? practical tips
- ?? staff attitude
- ?? marketing meeting the need
- ?? budgeting

In his two sessions *Smart and sassy* on Monday and Tuesday Gerald Pauschmann coached us to open our minds through laughter, and provided a light-hearted look at technology, tips in using it, and ideas to help us be *victors* of change instead of *victims*.

Continuing the *Smart issues* theme Christine Mackenzie from the City of Brisbane, Ngian Lek Choh from NLB Singapore and Sue Organ from Stanthorpe Shire addressed ebusiness issues such as

- ?? access, getting communities online, learning and development
- ?? leadership, change management and partnerships
- ?? case studies of GraniteNet as a virtual online community in Stanthorpe, and developments in Singapore

In the concurrent *Smart people practices* Allan Vincent from the LGAQ asked the question 'Libraries exist to serve the community? but what is the community?' He noted that

- ?? the community is changing and is becoming more demanding
- ?? different work patterns
- ?? libraries should be open when people want to use them
- ?? challenges for local government include performance management, retention of good employees, succession planning and smart recruitment

Allan's presentation was complemented very well by Margie Anderson from The One Umbrella Group. She asked, who are smart library people?, the response to which was they are

- ?? successful, relevant, innovative
- ?? add value to their service
- ?? drive the future of their services, staff and themselves
- ?? embrace change and act courageously and take risks
- ?? know their own strengths and weaknesses

At a practical level Margie emphasised the importance of checking job references, and of 'bragging more about our achievements'. She also noted that there is 'nothing more political than local government'.

Geoff Johnson from the Gartner Group than addressed us about *Smart technology*, and how the knowledge management hype will subside by 2006. In his big-picture of the world's economy and technology, points included

- ?? IT linkage? where is the benefit for clients?
- ?? cost cutting is endemic
- ?? security is a major issue
- ?? the library market will be popular with IT vendors because of its lack of volatility
- ?? challenges, include managing intellectual assets
- ?? brand image is important

?? by 2005 about 30% of people will be knowledge workers, up from the present 15%
?? libraries and librarians tend to underestimate their value

That last point made by Geoff reminds me of the futurist who, in arguing the case for creativity over knowledge, said 'If knowledge was power, librarians would rule the world'. Librarians do not aspire to rule the world but perhaps with their distinctive and disinterested values the world would be a better place if they did.

In the *Smart spaces* session Cecilia Kugler from CK Design International passionately asserted that

?? every time we need to change something? even the carpet? is an opportunity
?? the need to maximize use of assets and minimise the costs of using infrastructure
?? flexibility
?? clear identification of your personality will be your great asset

Cecilia was followed by Geoff Larkin from Stephenson and Turner Architects, who picked up the flexibility theme and provided an excellent checklist for building projects. He spoke about

?? smart spaces and timeless values of library buildings
?? buildings are static but libraries are dynamic

and that buildings should be

?? flexible
?? accessible
?? extendable (preserve plans)
?? stimulating
?? comfortable
?? organised
?? secure
?? economical
?? sustainable

The session on the National Training Package Review led by Cheryl Colegrave from Arts Training Qld provided a valued opportunity to participate in the review.

About the very enjoyable dinner last night I am tempted to comment at length, but I will confine myself to saying it was a terrific occasion, a fine meal, great music, and Fiona Emberton from Brisbane City? you were again elegantly outstanding on the dance floor? whoever said the Scots are a taciturn people!

My congratulations to the Qld Innovation Grant winners announced at the dinner by Eric Finger. These awards are a distinctive and important part of the Qld public library scene, and the envy of some other states. It was also good to see in person the sponsor of the conference dinner Peter Dal, who really is now a major Australasian library supplier.

Today's keynote address on *Smart strategies for keeping ahead* showed why Sue Sutherland from Christchurch City Libraries is an international public library leader we could almost claim as an honorary Australian.

What about that 77% membership in the People's Republic of Christchurch? The highest figure I have ever identified in Australia is 86% in a South Australian school community library which has a captive school clientele. Finland claims the highest average membership of 80% but Australia has only about 55%, so many libraries have a way to go before emulating Christchurch's achievement.

Sue emphasized the importance of

- ?? the right people , with vision, energy, enthusiasm, ‘spark’ and a can-do approach
- ?? valuing our entrepreneurs and the non librarians who can help us
- ?? like Margie Anderson, the need to celebrate achievement as a marketing tool
- ?? quality of thinking
- ?? strategic vision
- ?? overcoming bureaucratic inertia by the smallest possible project teams, not committees
- ?? keeping up to date professionally
- ?? learning from other sectors such as retail
- ?? not trying to develop draft perfection, or perfection from day one

In a particularly appealing phrase Sue reminded us that ‘we are in the quality of life business’.

The *Smart ideas forum* after Sue’s session indeed took the QPLA conference to a new level of quality and interactivity.

The ‘marketplace’ for the presentation of 24 ideas and projects was a hub bub of noise, and I came away with several ideas worth thinking about for my university library.

Greg Hallam ED of the Local Government Association of Qld in the session *Local government getting smart* spoke enthusiastically about the local government? library partnership, demonstrating why the LGAQ is so highly regarded. His points included

- ?? libraries are strategically placed to develop social capital
- ?? in the LGAQ surveys libraries always rate very highly
- ?? libraries should be leaders in communities
- ?? optimism about the future but concern about the Qld State Government’s funding commitment to local public libraries? a commitment not consistent with the ‘smart state’ aspirations of the government

Greg showed us *his* own commitment to the importance of libraries with his statement that ‘Whenever I visit a local authority I make a point of visiting the library’. A friend of libraries, indeed.

His session was followed by Queensland’s new? and first female? State Librarian recounting how smart libraries build smart communities. From my former work colleague Lea Giles-Peters we heard about opportunities and challenges, the State Library’s leading-edge new *Voyager* system, the major building project and her aspirations for a repositioning of the State Library as an integral part of the State’s total public library system. Other points raised by Lea included

- ?? the importance of getting others on side? but we are still too fuzzy to outsiders
- ?? priorities are coming together across all levels of government
- ?? the need to align public libraries with state and local government priorities
- ?? connecting local and global communities
- ?? social cohesion and the building of communities
- ?? the development of 31 indigenous knowledge centres in Qld
- ?? whilst here is great change, there is great continuity with the past

Lea concluded her very positive address by quoting from the Singapore government’s delightful reference to public libraries as contributing to a ‘gracious society’? ‘gracious’, in my OED having a number of meanings, such as ‘Having pleasing qualities’ and ‘Characterised by or exhibiting kindness or courtesy’.

Lea was followed by Veronica Lunn from Lunn Consulting who in *Strategically smart* spoke about the QPLA strategic planning process, and the importance of

- ?? telling stories as a tool
- ?? articulating the QPLA vision of *Empowered public libraries enriching Qld communities*
- ?? becoming outcomes focused

- ?? leadership is everyone's business
- ?? maximising energies and partnerships across the state
- ?? making sure plans are dynamic
- ?? values
- ?? the seven key themes from the QPLA partnership? partnering, efficient operation, clear vision, representation, review and evaluation, being the best one can be, passion in the library industry

Veronica made two observations, one of which we know to be true, and the other which is a compliment to all of you here, and your colleagues back in your libraries. 'Libraries' she said 'do change lives' and 'I have been very impressed by the quality of the thinking in Qld'.

In the final presentation of what has been a packed two days, John Townsend from Townsend International in *Smart lifestyles* asked 'How's your life going?' His points included

- ?? stress management provides an opportunity for reassessment
- ?? stress is different things to different people
- ?? the role of change is a major stress factor
- ?? attitude control and change
- ?? the fight or flight response
- ?? the importance of exercise

John made two very important points. The first was the value of creative leisure and living and taking time for ourselves. The other was that librarians are desperately needed to help people navigate in a world of infoglut.

I must say that in listening to John's well-appreciated words my mind tracked back to something that Cr Jan Grew observed in her opening of the conference yesterday. You may remember that she said

I have always been amazed at the apparent calmness of (Gold Coast) library staff no matter what the crisis ...it is worth bottling and preserving

Gold Coast library staff have, apparently, already learned well the stress responses John Townsend has painted for us, and perhaps do have a calmness product worth bottling, preserving, and even selling to the rest of us!

One of the roles of a conference rapporteur is to bring together disparate conference threads, but for this conference there is really no such need. All of the sessions have linked very well to the *Smart libraries? smarter state* theme. Qld public libraries? and other libraries too? are very fortunate to have the *Smart state* aspirations of Qld with which to connect? your colleagues in other states would envy you such a ready handle to open the door to the societal, political, economic and democratic return on investment in the public library during the 21st century.

Another role of a rapporteur is to reflect on what might have been. If time had permitted there are a few areas which could have been included in the program, and which the next conference committee may wish to consider

- ?? How we research, identify and advocate for the *qualitative* outcomes of public investment in public libraries? just how do libraries change lives? We do run the risk of the often crudely forged quantitative sword of library effectiveness being turned on us
- ?? How public librarians can *connect* with, and be better informed about, their colleagues and *their* challenges in other sectors of the profession

?? How we can advocate for better local, state and national investment in Australia's most heavily used and appreciated educational, informational, cultural and recreational institution beyond

?? the 6c per Australian per day

?? the typically less than 5% of rate revenue of local authority rate revenue

?? the meagre .173 of one per cent of Qld state government outlays compared with SA .261 and Tasmania .368

?? How we can foster citizen advocates for better public libraries through Friends of Libraries Groups

As the recent FOLA (Friends of Libraries Australia) conference in Sydney demonstrated, we do have friends out there to support our endeavours on their behalf? potentially nearly 13 million of them. For Qld there is now a suggestion to develop a state focus for Friends groups under the charming acronym of FROLIQ? Friends of Libraries in Qld. If this eventuates, Qld will be the first state to have a regional FOLA group.

FOLA, FROLIQ and FOL groups around Australia can be a major focus for citizen advocacy for better libraries, but such groups cannot really exist unless public librarians do not fear them, seek to understand their roles and potential, perhaps initiate them, and certainly nurture them. Fortunately many already do and recognize the sense of Vigdor Schreiberman's observation that

Libraries serve democracy not the pursuit of wealth. The constituency for democracy is the people, who have the fundamental constitutional right to exercise exclusive control over the election of our government. That is where the power of libraries also lies if they are wise enough to marshal that unique resource

These are suggestions, not criticisms. However I do have one criticism about the conference, but it is one that can levelled at too many of our professional conferences? the lack of a cohesive, permanent, and durable record of its outcomes. This is ironic? we are like the cobbler's children left poorly shod.

The ALIA Board of Directors during my just-completed presidential term endorsed the following *Core values statement* which I commend to you if you are ever seeking a clear, unequivocal iteration of why libraries and library professionals are critical to a thriving Australian and global culture, economy and democracy

ALIA Core Values Statement

A thriving culture, economy, and democracy requires the free flow of information and ideas.

Fundamental to that free flow of information and ideas are Australia's library and information services. They are a legacy to each generation, conveying the knowledge of the past and the promise of the future.

Library and information services professionals therefore commit themselves to the following core values of their profession.

1 *Promotion of the free flow of information and ideas through open access to recorded knowledge, information, and creative works*

We assert that this access across time and across cultures is fundamental to a thriving culture, economy and democracy

- 2 ***Connection of people to ideas***
We guide, inform and educate the seeker in defining and refining the search, and foster intellectual freedom and all forms of communication
- 3 ***Commitment to literacy, information literacy and learning***
We enable independent and formal lifelong learning by providing resources and expertise to meet the needs of learners, and of the human spirit
- 4 ***Respect for the diversity and individuality of all people***
We accept each request without bias and in confidence, and strive to meet it with all our resources and expertise
- 5 ***Preservation of the human record***
We seek to preserve the cultural memory, knowledge and evolved wisdom of humankind, to explain the past, illuminate the present and inform the future
- 6 ***Excellence in professional service to our communities***
We strive for integrity, competence, personal growth, and service to our profession and to our communities
- 7 ***Partnerships to advance these values***
We advocate cooperation between all library and information services, and with related agencies, for the private and public good

Value 5 is the *Preservation of the human record* by which ‘we seek to preserve the cultural memory, knowledge and evolved wisdom of humankind, to explain the past, illuminate the present and inform the future’.

Posterity, alas, is unlikely to have ready access to what has proceeded at this conference. Our successors of the end of the 21st century, in identifying how libraries and librarians helped create the *Smart state* of Queensland will likely be unaware of this seminal conference. Its website will have been long gone, and no printed proceedings will exist.

So, we have experienced a conference which has raised its head above the local and professional navel-gazing level to look at what is occurring internationally and in other states. It has helped us look at the big-picture societal and technological context in which we will be working for the information-enabling of all Australians during the 21st century. We have been urged to be courageous and take risks. That has been balanced by consideration of practical and political issues in developing our libraries. Achieving that balance in a relatively short conference is not easily done.

In the last year I have participated in about 15 conferences? this conference *Smart libraries smarter state* ranks close to the top of those conferences in terms of a theme consistently addressed by its program, balance, speakers, organisation, exhibition, social program, overall dynamic, friendliness... and fun.

As several speakers stressed, we *are* a profession of which Australia has great need in the 21st century. Indeed, in his welcome to us on the very first page of that excellent program booklet Mayor of the Gold Coast Cr Gary Baildon noted that

The conference will provide well-deserved encouragement and support for the vitally important library services which help educate, inform and entertain communities across Australia.

I am sure you will agree that the conference has done all of that, and more, which should leave us inspired and enthused about how *public libraries* can help make a *smart state*. Prue Mercer noted that social commentator Hugh McKay observed at the big-picture ALIA conference in Sydney last week, that Australia and Australians face many challenges but that ‘It is a great time to be an Australian, and a great time to be a librarians’. This conference has shown us why. We are in the debt of all of the speakers, sponsors, vendors and of course, the organising committee led so ably by our outstanding colleague Dr Naida Tattersall. Please join me in thanking them.