
MY WAY : PERSONAL PRACTICE IN HEALTH LIBRARIES

A small but enthusiastic group of Health Librarians met at the Ballarat Base Hospital on Wednesday, 27 March for the ALIA Health Libraries Section (Victoria) first seminar for 1996. Participants came mostly from Western and Northern Victoria, although special mention should be made of the four intrepid members who made the trip up the Pentlands from Melbourne.

Sandra Tunley, a psychologist from Bendigo, led the first session, entitled "Managing your stress". After establishing that most librarians did **not** enter the profession because they were shy, retiring and liked reading books, Sandra went on to define stress (which can be a healthy stimulus) and distress (with its adverse physiological consequences). She concentrated on physical techniques for stress management - exercise, physical work and relaxation therapy, ranging from taking a deep breath and counting to ten, to the use of Benson's technique of relaxation. At the end of the session the group shared their own strategies for relieving stress - vigorous walking or jogging and gardening being top of the list.

If new technology is a source of stress for some librarians, they were out of luck with the second session, which was an Internet demonstration by George Fong, from Ballarat NetConnect. A very polished speaker, George held the attention of the whole group - quite an achievement, given that the knowledge of the Internet within the audience ranged from only basic to more than one experienced user. And there lies one of the challenges of surfing the Net - that you can always learn something new, or a new way of finding something old. After a brief

demonstration of finding information on the Net, using BSE as an example, other applications of the Internet in hospitals were discussed, including the use of FTP (file transfer protocol). It became apparent that confidentiality and the need to secure information against access by unauthorized individuals was a major stumbling block for more widespread use of the Internet. Where there are Internet connections within hospitals, it is generally on stand-alone computers, with few prepared to risk connection via their mainframes, despite the potential massive benefits, because of the fear of breaches of confidentiality apparently unallayed by the use of passwords for protection. It was a stimulating session.

The last session before lunch was presented by Stephen Due, currently President of HLS (Victoria). Stephen gave us a brief introduction to the new Library Competency Standards, distributing a number of handouts on specific competencies and an overview in table form. These standards will eventually make a considerable impact both in the workplace and in education. In the workplace they would appear to be of value in areas such as recruitment and performance appraisal; in education, they are already being used in some technician level courses. For further information about the Library Competency Standards, contact Marie Murphy at the ALIA Office on 1800 020071, or Stephen at the Geelong Hospital on 052 267 626.

A brief walk down the hill in the autumn sunshine took us to "The Leaning Tower", a local trattoria, where we refuelled on some excellent Italian cuisine.

The afternoon session (which went a little more slowly as some of the blood left our brains to work on our full stomachs!) was an open forum. A number of issues were raised:

- Policies on charging internal customers
- Strategies for raising money from current or potential external customers
- Policies on service to university students
- The increasing use of hospital libraries by students from TAFE and other courses

It was interesting that regardless of the size or location of the library, we all share the same problems, and learnt from hearing how other libraries coped with situations and problems similar to our own. Many thanks to David Lloyd for organising another highly successful day.

Janine Lucato
Queen Elizabeth Centre, Ballarat

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