



QULOC News

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Interview with Alex Byrne

Dr Alex Byrne is the President 2005-2007 of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA - <http://www.ifla.org>), and was interviewed by Heather Gordon.

Alex is the Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (Teaching and Learning) and Vice-President (Alumni and Development), University of Technology Sydney. Alex has held numerous positions in Australian university libraries including most recently as University Librarian at the University of Technology, Sydney. Alex received his PhD from the University of Sydney in 2005.



How did you first get involved with IFLA?

The first IFLA conference I attended was in 1988 in Sydney. I found the professional interaction with colleagues from so many other nations to be stimulating but much of the content not so

interesting. I really began to get involved at the 1993 conference that was held in Barcelona, Spain, which I attended as a newly elected member of the standing committee for the Section on University and other Research Libraries. That engagement with my peers from university libraries around the world proved to be most rewarding and led to a term as chair of the section from 1997 to 1999.

Meanwhile, I had been nominated at the 1995 conference in Istanbul, Turkey (I assume by Warren Horton, former Director General of the National Library of Australia) to join an ad hoc committee of representatives from 30 nations which had been asked to consider if and how IFLA might become involved with human rights issues relating to library and information services. The committee's recommendation to establish a permanent body, the Committee on Free Access to Information and Freedom of Expression (FAIFE), was adopted at the 1997 conference in Copenhagen, Denmark and I was invited later that year to chair the new committee and establish the new core activity. This was a tremendous honour and offered a most exciting, challenging and rewarding opportunity to apply my skills in a most important but also contentious area of professional practice. I led the FAIFE initiative for six years, until August 2003 during which time we handled many challenging issues and established the modus operandi of the activity and its reputation in our field and with other organisations interested in intellectual freedom, key intergovernmental agencies and with some governments.

My success in guiding that initiative resulted in me being asked to stand for the presidency of IFLA. I was elected in 2003 and served as President-elect/Vice President until 2005 when I became President.

What are the highlights and challenges of being president of such a large international organisation?

It is a tremendous honour to be the President of the world body for our profession, “the global voice of the library and information profession”. It is a privilege to visit colleagues in many countries and see the fine work they are doing, often in very challenging contexts. In spite of the obvious differences of place, culture and resources, I am constantly struck by the consistency of our values and aspirations as well as the diversity of means we adopt to make information readily accessible and deliver benefits to our users.

My time in the leadership of IFLA has been dominated by our involvement with the World Summit on the Information Society with which IFLA and I personally have been actively engaged since 2000. We have tried to influence the direction of the Summit and its outcomes, with considerable success. A tremendous highlight was addressing some 5000 delegates in a plenary session of the Summit in Tunis, Tunisia at the November 2005 Summit meeting. Other highlights to date have included: speaking in the Hall of the General Assembly of the United Nations in Geneva – the hall was built for the League of Nations and is redolent of the history of the twentieth century; leading a series of pre-Summit meetings in the new great library of Alexandria, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina; and many addresses to colleagues at IFLA conferences (now called the World Library and Information Congress).

As only the second IFLA president from outside northern Europe or the USA in nearly 80 years of operation, I feel a particular responsibility to make IFLA’s focus more global by continuing the process of reformation. To that end I have sponsored the extension of our working languages to include Arabic and Chinese and have encouraged the establishment of more regional offices to service particular regions of the world. We are currently refocusing the work of our very small secretariat, rebuilding its technology base and business systems and reviewing the statutes (ie constitution). Much has been done to improve the annual conference, now called the World Library and Information Congress, and we are engaging more with pan-national library

organisations such as CONSAL (Congress of Southeast Asian Libraries) and AFLI (Arab Federation of Libraries and Information). The aim is to make IFLA more global, more efficient and more relevant to library and information organisations, their staff and those they serve.

Why should Australian library workers get involved in IFLA or other library organisations including QULOC?

Why get involved? I think that this is well summarised in John F Kennedy’s famous statement in his inaugural address “ask not what your country can do for you--ask what you can do for your country ... [ask] together what we can do for the freedom of man”. If we transfer this inspiring sentiment to our organisations, we won’t ask “what’s in it for me?” when we consider ALIA, CAUL, QULOC, IFLA or other organisations within our professional field or in our communities. We will, rather, consider what we might contribute to making those organisations more relevant and more useful. We will consider the problems we encounter in our professional practice, the needs of our clients and communities as well as the situations of other colleagues and contemplate how they might be improved by collective action through our professional and other organisations. In giving some of our time and applying our skills and knowledge cooperatively, we can achieve amazing things. Surprisingly, even though we contribute altruistically, we find that we are rewarded tremendously for our participation through the results we achieve, the benefits for our profession, personal gratification and the esteem and friendship of colleagues.

My involvement in IFLA, CAUL and other organisations has entailed much time away from home, pleasures foregone, extra pressures and loss of sleep but it has been outrageously rewarding. It is both deeply satisfying and humbling to know that my efforts together with colleagues have made a real difference to the work of colleagues and the lives of people, most of whom I will never meet. And it is even more humbling to see so many colleagues with shared goals doing such good work.

How has your library education and work experience prepared you for your current role and responsibilities as Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (Teaching and Learning) and Vice-President (Alumni and Development) at the University of Technology Sydney?

Those titles really are a mouthful! The jobs encompass broad responsibilities for teaching and learning quality, academic support (including library and online learning), academic industrial matters, alumni relations, fundraising and few other areas. Much of the work involves strategic planning, quality assurance, policy development and implementation, and problem solving. These are the sorts of things that librarians are good at because we have a strong client focus and take a long view in developing our collections and services. We have shown leadership in quality assurance from the long running CAUL statistics to the more recent performance indicators and benchmarking. We combine high ideals with practicality and are used to operating complex systems often collaboratively with other parts of our universities or other libraries. Broad experience in these areas has provided a strong foundation for my current responsibilities but I'm always learning!

With your busy schedule, including travel, how do you maintain a work/life balance?

I have been blessed with good health and a wonderful family who keep me grounded. For example, returning from a trip to several countries in which I was treated with some deference as IFLA President, I arrived home about 7 am and by 9 was helping one of my children move home with no deference at all as we moved lounges and beds up a precipitous staircase.

Keeping a balance is vitally important for our health and our relationships. Just as throwing ourselves into our work and professional activities enriches our lives, the converse is true in that strong relationships and fun with friends and family make us more resilient to the challenges of work.

What trends are you watching now?

Our profession continues to be exciting. The many technologies we have assimilated and exploited to

date are being joined by new, mobile and mutable information and communication technologies that will allow us to be even more responsive to our clients' needs. I am very interested in the interfaces between technologies, people and information and the ways in which we can increasingly deliver platform independent information when and where desired. The open access revolution is also most exciting, especially for those of us involved with research and scholarly publications – in less than a decade it has had considerable impact and is poised to transform scholarly communication, to return it to the academy which let it go 3-4 decades ago. In addition, I am also interested in the changing nature of work, both ours and that of our clients, and in considering how our organisations might evolve.

In the broader IFLA context, I continue to be concerned about the situation of the information-have-nots and inequality in information access together with the compounding issues of censorship, poverty, corruption, etc. I feel a sense of urgency for our profession to exploit its capabilities and to realise its promise to help change the world for the better.

What advice do you have for librarians just starting their careers in universities?

At the risk of sounding flippant: have fun and do good! We spend so much of our lives in pursuing our careers that they should be enjoyable and rewarding in the fullest sense of the words. I believe that we do this by becoming actively and fully engaged with our profession, by always seeking to learn and to improve what we find. We do this by looking in and around corners, through the professional looking glass, to see other ways of doing our work and of meeting the goals of our organisations and needs of our clients and of improving the profession. We do it through collaboration and by putting our shoulders to the wheel. Getting involved with professional organisations – ALIA, QULOC and beyond – is a very good way of going beyond our immediate environment. Developing relationships with colleagues often leads to friendships, useful mentoring, and further opportunities. And keep learning – on the job, informally and through further formal study.

Having seen so many new entrants to the profession, and particularly those involved with IFLA's New Professionals and ALIA's New Librarians, I know that the future of the profession is in good hands. As one of the oldest professions we will continue, change and prosper long into the future.

University Librarians Forum

A heavy thunderstorm and the resulting loss of computing equipment failed to dampen the spirits of those attending the University Librarians Forum 2005. Over 60 people attended the forum held at the Queensland College of Art, Griffith University. The University Librarians offered discussions on a wide range of subjects including the UQ Library Review experience, library services for the post-digital scholar, and the experience of serving on IATUL. This was also the final Forum for John McKinlay who retired from James Cook University in December. John reflected on the changes in libraries since his first position at the University of Tasmania in 1963. The presentations and more photographs are available on the QULOC website, www.quloc.org.au under QULOC Groups/ University Librarians/ University Librarians Forum

The panel topic *Managing Up, Down and Around* drew some lively and candid comments from panelists, known only to those who attended. Intrigued? Mark your diaries now for the next forum on November 23rd at the University of Queensland



John McKinlay gives his presentation "Would the first university library that I worked at in 1963 have passed an AUQA audit?"



ULs Forum Audience



Panel session 1 to 5; Gaynor Austen, Con Graves, Gulcin Cribb, Mary Lyons, Graham Black



L to r; Libby Fielding, Laurel Dingle, Helen Trochoulías, Grace Saw



L to r; Gaynor Austen, Robyn Smith, Michael Whiteway, Robyn Tweedale

Success at Southern Cross University

In late 2005 the Southern Cross University Library was invited to contribute to the development of a new foundation program, *Preparing for Success at SCU*, proposed for initial delivery in Semester 2, 2006.

The Program

Preparing for Success at SCU is designed as an alternative pathway to gain entry to Southern Cross University and offers a guaranteed place for those who successfully complete it. It will run twice a year at the Lismore campus, during second semester over twelve weeks and again as an intensive eight week summer school from December to February. DEST funding has been allocated initially for fifty places in the program.

Students are required to study three units. Two of these, *Academic Study Skills* and *Introduction to University Studies*, are core units and the third is selected from units aligned with the University Faculties, i.e. Arts, Business or Health and Applied Sciences. Students who satisfactorily complete the program will be offered an undergraduate place in the Faculty of the unit they chose to study.

In 2006 the program will be offered internally and each unit will include four hours of face to face study per week. It is anticipated that, from 2007, the twelve week course will be offered both internally and externally and, from 2008, by mixed mode via a combination of face to face teaching and resource based learning through print materials and online interaction.

The Library's Role

The Library's contribution has been to the bulk of the core unit, *Introduction to University Studies*. Eighty percent of the unit is a module covering information literacy and basic computing skills which staff from the Reference Services section have developed and will deliver. As well as being the course coordinator, the Head of the University's Learning Assistance Unit is also the unit coordinator in this instance as the unit also contains a small module covering exam preparation techniques that will be delivered by Learning Assistance staff.

The Library module includes topics on basic computing, navigating the University's online environment, defining topics, identifying information sources, using the Library catalogue, researching literature and searching and evaluating internet resources. It also covers information management, referencing, copyright and plagiarism.

The Process

In late December 2005 the Library was approached to develop content for the unit and Reference Services happily accepted the task. While the challenge was somewhat daunting, particularly with the tight time frame involved, the section realised it was a fantastic opportunity to contribute to long term plans to embed information literacy skills training throughout the University curriculum.

The Lismore Reference Services team is a small one, with five full-time and two part-time librarians, which collectively had very little experience with developing an academic syllabus. Content needed to be formulated and an unit outline and blueprint submitted for course approval by February 2006. Subsequent documentation, including the unit information guide, book of readings, workbook and study guide were required by late May.

Work on the unit did not begin until early January and we initially adopted a whole-of-team approach to the task. This was due in large part to staff absences on recreation leave, but also as we wanted to ensure we developed something that everyone in the team was happy with. After all, we are all going to be teaching in the unit eventually. The process started with brainstorming a framework for the syllabus and investigating similar ventures at other university libraries. Thankfully there are many high quality programs and resources available, especially here in Australia, and we owe much to QULOC libraries in particular for the excellent advice and assistance we have received.

Everyone in the team contributed right through the unit outline and blueprint development stage, however when it came to writing the rest of the documents a different approach was taken. Issues such as task coordination and consistency in style

demanding that the number of writers was kept to a minimum and two volunteers from the team were given the responsibility. To accommodate this, the rest of the team covered the regular workload of the two staff involved by filling their desk shifts, taking on extra information skills classes and adopting their liaison roles. In a real sense then, it remained a whole-of-team undertaking.

The Outcomes

At this time the teaching of the unit has not yet begun, however, two Reference Services staff have been appointed to teach the first time around. We are looking at this coming semester as very much a pilot project from which we will have to maximise our opportunities for student feedback and evaluation and ensure we respond to that in a timely and appropriate manner. We are already turning our focus to the challenges of offering the unit externally and online in the future. Indeed, much of the unit material has been developed and written with this already in mind.

The unit's development has acted as a catalyst for reviewing and refining the range of training resources and services Southern Cross Library has available and this process will continue over ensuing months. The prospect of teaching in the online environment also puts before us opportunities for expanding our current training practices to better cater for the needs of external students in particular.

One final and welcome result of this project has been a renewed sense of collaboration and cooperation between Reference Services staff and their colleagues from the Learning Assistance Unit and from Information Technology and Telecommunications Services. Staff from IT&TS were heavily involved in developing the basic computing component of the Library module and are keen to have an ongoing role in team teaching those topics with Library staff. Work on the project has quickly led to wider discussions on how the three areas can work more closely together in the future to deliver a seamless package of skills training to new students. A welcome prospect indeed.

Tim Pedrazzini
Reference Services Supervisor, SCU

News from the Working Parties

Lending and Document Delivery Working Party

The Lending and Document Delivery Working Party and the Information Skills and Services Working Party jointly coordinated the recent seminar *Selling the Library Message*. Held at the Australian Catholic University on 22nd June, this seminar explored issues relating to the promotion of library products and services.

The morning session included presentations from three speakers. Bill Concannon, CEO of Mary Ryan Bookstores, outlined an impressive array of different promotional approaches used by his company. Bill also stressed the importance of clearly identifying your niche market and not being tempted to stray too far from this. The other presenters, Barb Ewers, QUT Communications & External Relations Manager, and Justine Martini, Marketing Project Officer with the State Library of Queensland provided excellent planning advice and included many practical examples from within the academic and broader library environments. Their presentations and handouts, along with some sample promotional websites provided by various institutions, are available from the QULOC website www.quloc.org.au under *Meetings and Events/Events/Selling the Library Message*.

The afternoon breakout groups offered participants a chance to apply some of the principles identified in the morning sessions to case study scenarios. The day finished with a panel discussion and brief presentations from Deb Turnbull, (UQ), Mandy Callow (USQ), and Kayleen Wardell (SCU) each discussing a promotional campaign or strategy that proved successful at their respective libraries.

The seminar attracted 60 attendees including significant representation from TAFE and public libraries.

Elizabeth Firman
University of Southern Queensland
Convenor, Lending and Document Delivery Working Party



Barb Ewers facilitating one of the breakout groups at Selling the Library Message



Speaker, Justine Martini with Ann Spelman & Beth Crawter

Staffing Issues Working Party

The Staffing Issues Working Party held a workshop on workforce planning in late March. The workshop was to discuss the workforce issues facing libraries, share what individual libraries were doing, and develop strategies to address the common issues. All QULOC University Librarians or their nominees were invited to take part. Twenty people attended the workshop, facilitated by Dr Gillian Hallam from QUT.

Michael Breaks, the University Librarian from Heriot Watt University, provided the international context via a videoconference link, a particularly generous contribution considering it was 1.30am his time. Michael talked about the changing academic library environment and its implications for staff. Gillian Hallam presented the Australian context, focusing on characteristics of the library

profession and the demographic issues likely to impact upon it. Case studies on individual library workforce planning initiatives were then presented from State Library of Queensland, the LATN group, University of Southern Queensland and the University of New England.

The afternoon session of the workshop was a whole-group discussion about recruitment and selection issues such as job design, position descriptions, sourcing good applicants, assessing skills and attitudes, and the selection process. Issues related to managing the existing workforce were also discussed, particularly motivation of long-term staff, encouraging the development of desired attitudes and generation X/Y work attitudes.

The workshop provided a forum for the discussion of workforce issues common to all libraries. One of the unexpected benefits of the workshop was the information from Gillian Hallam about current library courses, the nature of incoming librarianship students and the implications for the future of the profession. The Working Party plans to hold a follow-up workshop next year to address some of the challenges identified at this workshop. Some of the presentations from the workshop are available on the QULOC website <http://www.quloc.org.au/> under QULOC Groups, Staffing Issues Reports and Presentations.

Sandra Jeffries
University of Southern Queensland
Convenor, Staffing Issues Working Party



Gaynor Austen welcomes participants to the Workforce Planning Workshop.



Dr Gillian Hallam facilitated the Workforce Planning Workshop



The Staffing Issues Working Party also organised *Write that Report*, on developing the skills needed for successful business writing. Held at the University of Queensland on 12th May the workshop was facilitated by Rod Millican.



Some of the participants in the Write that Report workshop with facilitator, Rod Millican (standing, second from right)

University Librarians' Committee News

Jim Graham from the Australian Catholic University will commence his 2-year term as QULOC Convenor from 3 July 2006. Kerrie McLaren will continue on as the QULOC Executive Officer, assisting Jim in his new role. The Committee extends their thanks to outgoing Convenor, Heather Gordon. Heather recently took up her new position as Director, Information Services and University Librarian, James Cook University.

Welcome to Keith Webster, University Librarian and Director of Learning Services at the University of Queensland. Keith will also be the mentor for the Information Skills and Services Working Party

Congratulations to Des Stewart who was appointed University Librarian at Southern Cross University. Des is now the mentor for the Information and Communication Technology Working Party

Diary Dates

Communicating with Clients using New Technologies: Reprise and Update
Monday 28th August 2006, 10am – 4pm, QUT

EndNote Masterclass for Trainers
Friday 27th October 2006, 1pm -4.30pm, QUT

University Librarians Forum
Thursday 23rd November 2006, 1.30 – 5pm
Conference Room
University of Queensland

<http://www.quloc.org.au>

For information on contributions to QULOC News contact Kerrie McLaren: K.McLaren@griffith.edu.au