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SENATE

ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNICATIONS, INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY AND THE ARTS REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Reference: Role of libraries in the online environment

WEDNESDAY, 30 APRIL 2003

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SENATE
ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNICATIONS, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
AND THE ARTS REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 30 April 2003

Members: Senator Cherry (*Chair*), Senator Tierney (*Deputy Chair*), Senators Lundy, Mackay, Tchen and Wong

Substitute members: Senator Moore to replace Senator Wong

Participating members: Senators Abetz, Allison, Bolkus, Boswell, Brown, Buckland, George Campbell, Carr, Chapman, Conroy, Coonan, Eggleston, Chris Evans, Faulkner, Ferguson, Ferris, Harradine, Harris, Knowles, Lees, Mason, McGauran, Murphy, Nettle, Payne and Watson

Senators in attendance: Senators Cherry, Lundy, Moore and Tchen

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

The role of libraries as providers of public information in the online environment, having particular regard to:

- (a) the current community patterns of demand for public information services throughout libraries, including the provision of such information online;
- (b) the response by libraries (public, university, research) to the changing information needs of Australians, including through the provision of online resources;
- (c) possible strategies which would enhance the wider use and distribution of information resources held by libraries, including the establishment of library networks, improved online access in libraries, online libraries, and greater public knowledge and skill in using library resources;
- (d) the use of libraries to deliver information and services over the Internet to more effectively meet community demands for public information in the online environment; and
- (e) the roles of various levels of government, the corporate sector and libraries themselves in ensuring the most effective use of libraries as primary public information resource in the online environment.

WITNESSES

BAUER, Ms Louise, City Librarian, Caloundra City Libraries321

**BRUCE, Associate Professor Christine, Director of Teaching and Learning, School of
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**YOUNG, Ms Carolyn Dale, Acting Director, Library Services, Queensland University of
Technology295**

Committee met at 2.30 p.m.

BRUCE, Associate Professor Christine, Director of Teaching and Learning, School of Information Systems, Queensland University of Technology

McCARTHY, Mrs Jennifer Joan, Acting Associate Director, Library Services (Development), Queensland University of Technology

MIDDLETON, Mr Michael Robert, Senior Lecturer, Information Management, School of Information Systems, Queensland University of Technology

YOUNG, Ms Carolyn Dale, Acting Director, Library Services, Queensland University of Technology

SAYERS, Mr Richard Colin (Private capacity)

ACTING CHAIR (Senator Tchen)—I declare open this public hearing of the Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts References Committee, and I welcome everyone here. We are pleased to be here in Caboolture as it will give us an opportunity to hear first hand the experience of people living in the region in relation to the role of libraries in the online environment. I welcome our panel of witnesses. Mr Middleton, the committee has your submission, which we have already published. Would you like to make any alterations or corrections to that written submission?

Mr Middleton—No, we are happy with it as it stands.

ACTING CHAIR—The committee prefers all evidence to be given in public. However, should you at any stage wish to give your evidence or part of your evidence or answers to any questions in private you may ask to do so and we will consider your request. Evidence given to the committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. The giving of false or misleading evidence to a committee may constitute a contempt of the Senate. I invite you to make an opening statement before we move to questions.

Mr Middleton—I would like to summarise briefly our statement, which was put together by Professor Bruce, who is a specialist in information literacy; Helen Partridge, another member of staff who cannot be here; and me. The three of us are from the information technology faculty. On the way here I was saying to Christine that I had heard on the radio today that the National Library in Iraq had been sacked and burnt. I do not know the details, but I used to work at the National Library in Canberra. No doubt the senators are familiar with Canberra and aware of the edifice beside the lake.

ACTING CHAIR—I think we have a different method of changing regimes.

Mr Middleton—I was wondering whether, had Australia been occupied, its own populace would, as seems to have been the case in Iraq, tackle its national library in such a way. Of course, we regard that as a very significant cultural institution in this country, as we do libraries at the state and local level. Our submission in line with many of the others that the committee would have received from libraries made note of the importance of libraries to the community.

Our own submission we think is a little different because we give emphasis to the education of the professional staff that support the services through those libraries. And it is those that I want to say a little more about.

Our first point is that with the digital monitoring revolution, if we can call it that, it is recognised that access to information has been much more feasible for many more people. But we do not really feel that providing access to information necessarily means—at either the government or the private level—that information is accessed by people more effectively. There still needs to be processes to manage that effective access.

Sometimes these processes appear under the name of ‘information literacy’ and, professionally, we argue a lot amongst ourselves about what this means. If we accept that having as many members of the populace as information literate as possible who are able to effectively access and use information, we would have a better democracy and people who are better informed about decision making and the way it functions.

The most important professionals for making people information literate are librarians in institutions. Those institutions have changed a lot in the last decade, because formerly people had to go to them to obtain access to a lot of information. It is no longer necessary to go directly to an institution. They can be accessed digitally. But that is not to say that role of institutions is diminishing. In fact, they are becoming more significant for a number of reasons. I have already mentioned culture and the cultural role, but there are also important informational, business and recreation roles, which are all supported by the need to effectively find information.

Librarians have a very strong role in helping people to effectively find that information. Librarians generally see themselves much more as instructors than they have in the past in terms of assisting. They have always seen themselves as navigators in relation to where knowledge is. As a school of information systems charged with educating such people, we see ourselves as continuing to have a very strong role in making them information literate and enabling them to empower others.

We made a number of points in our statement. I will finish my brief summary on the last point—the role of government. Within our courses, we teach a fair bit on information policy. We know that librarians are professionally very involved with the development of information policy and we are also aware of the fact that Australia has chosen not to have a nationally coherent information policy. Whether or not there is a nationally coherent information policy, we still think it is very important to have a coherent policy framework—at least at the library level. It should be capable of, if you like, delineating and specifying the respective roles of government—the three levels of government—in Australia in relation to support for libraries and the information they provide. There could certainly be more development in that area. Thank you for this opportunity.

CHAIR—Do any other witnesses wish to make statements at this point in time?

Ms Young—I would like to say a couple of things about libraries in general but my particular concern is about university libraries, so I will deal mainly with that and the concern about our their students post their qualifications. Firstly, we have heard quite a bit in recent years that libraries will not be needed anymore because people have got all the information they need on

the Internet. I would like to point out some of the differences between the libraries and the Internet. Libraries actually select the resources that they put in. They select them for quality and for relevance and they make them available in ways that are going to be helpful to their clientele. They are providing all that assistance in information literacy training that Michael was talking about so that people can assess the relevance. This is one of the big differences between what is on the Internet and what is in a library collection and an online collection.

Our library collection has increased electronic resources. About 15 per cent of our dollars were spent on electronic resources in 1996. In 2002, it was 56 per cent. That just shows you the move that we made and we have made it quickly. The university library—and that is what I am dealing with now—is really moving as far as teaching and learning goes. We have had a physical library and we have now got, as I was explaining, a virtual library. I think one of the next steps we will be taking is a library at point of need, which is why we have digitised a lot of readings and provided them in online teaching pages that lecturers are preparing for particular subjects. Students need not only a certain number of information resources in the library; they also need some at the point of learning. That requires partnerships between academics and instructional designers who are creating the online teaching web pages, and between librarians. I think that is one of the things that we are going to be developing more and more in university libraries.

Libraries are also responsible for a lot of copyright management because, as you are well aware, once you have got material electronically available the focus on copyright becomes quite intense. One of the things that makes it difficult for our library are the contracts that we sign from electronic databases—and I am sure you have heard a lot about those. We are training our students in the use of these electronic full text, indexing and abstracting databases in the library, but what happens to those students when they finish and graduate? They have got a qualification. All of us know that the qualification we got is not going to last us more than a few years, so how are we going to continue to provide those graduates with access to information in the future? Some of them will get access to information through the commercial firms that they join or through government agencies. Some of them will get access to public libraries or professional associations. I think that public libraries are going to be the key resource for those graduates to continue to gain access to information which will keep their qualifications fresh and lead to professional lifelong learning. The licence agreements that university libraries sign only allow us to serve the client group we have got—our staff and our current students. They are not going to extend to our alumni. I see that as a real gap that needs to be filled, and I think that public libraries and state libraries are the keys to filling that gap.

Lastly, I have just a few words on university research and service to researchers. The university libraries are digitising research information resources. We believe we will have some strategic infrastructure initiative funding to digitise Australian research student theses and make them available in a single database which will be searchable globally. Many university libraries are creating e-print repositories of the research articles produced by their own researchers and e-publications or e-publishing houses. Those were the main points that I wanted to make.

Mrs McCarthy—I am assuming that Derek has made available to you a paper I wrote which describes some of the work that QUT library has done in integrating our services into the electronic environment. I wanted to pick up a couple of issues out of that paper and speak to those. The perspective that I will be taking is one that focuses on how our students work in the

current electronic learning environment. There are three things that I think are fairly important from the paper, and they are things which are happening in our environment now.

The nature of our client base has changed quite significantly. This will not be news to you; you will have heard that most full-time students now work an average of 15 hours a week at least. We are all very well aware that the Monday to Friday, 9 to 5 working week has gone, and we also know that many of the students who have come back to university have work and family responsibilities. So we have a different client base.

We know that the use of IT is ubiquitous. In QUT, for example, just about all our communication with our students is now through electronic mail, and all our courses have an online presence. So students need to be able to access IT. Finally, as Carolyn has also mentioned, there is an information explosion. It is an explosion in both print and electronic materials, and it is exceptionally hard for people to actually wade through the mass of materials that exist in the Internet. That is something that we need to keep in mind, and it ties in with comments that Mike has made about information literacy.

Another interesting thing that I noticed as I was coming to work yesterday morning and that I thought was a real sign of the times was that the ABC News yesterday gave an 1800 number as well as a web site for the public to go to find out information about the Pan medical crisis. I thought, 'That's a sign of the times when you get the two things repeated'—that is, the 1800 number and—

CHAIR—Even the ABC is up-to-date these days!

Mrs McCarthy—They are very up-to-date, but we are not here to talk about the ABC. But I did think it was quite interesting; I had never heard that before. In terms of those issues, I think there are some implications we need to think about. As I said, I am going to take a fairly strong student focus. All our students need very good access in a technical sense to online information, and that is by and large the responsibility of the university to provide that. We can do that on campus, but, because the nature of our student population has changed so much, students need IT access from home. They need a PC, they need a printer and they need an Internet connection from home. That to me is a fact of life. I live with two university students. There are some real equity issues for institutions and government to address in terms of how that is going to happen for students.

Probably more importantly, as well as them actually having the PC and the Internet connection, we really need to think about the actual quality of the access we are providing to them in terms of the bandwidth, the affordability and the reliability of that. It is actually not terribly satisfactory to simply have a dial-up Internet connection if you are wanting to download a lot of material. It is a very slow process. You can get dropped off. Those wonderful ads that are on TV now where people get dropped off are facts of life if you are downloading a lot of information. So there are real issues there in terms of providing affordable bandwidth for our population. I will make that plea from a students' point of view. Dial-up access through a modem is no longer a really acceptable thing.

Libraries need to understand a lot more about the information-seeking behaviour of our client base. We have a different generation of students. Those people under 25 have grown up with

PCs and mobile phones, and the way they go about finding information is, we think, probably different from the way some of us older people do it, but we do not know for sure. We know that there is heavy use of search engines like Google and perhaps not such heavy use of more formalised databases and library catalogues. But we need to do a lot more research into how people go about finding information these days. We need that research so that we can design our services to respond to the way people are doing their business these days.

Following on from that, and related again to what Mike has to say, we need a very highly professional work force that is going to design and deliver those services to our client base. Our entry-level training needs to ensure that our graduates have good IT skills and good knowledge management skills as well as all the traditional skills that we have expected of librarians. One of those in particular that I would like to highlight is very good customer service skills—the ability to work with individuals to solve a service issue.

Carolyn has talked about online learning, so I will not touch on that, but it is certainly an issue for us to make sure that we are integrating our information resources into the online learning arena. To add to what Mike has talked about in terms of information literacy, we really need to ensure that our population is information literate and to remind you that information literacy is different from IT literacy. You can use a PC and, using Google, get onto the Internet. But if you get a hit that gives you 500 pieces of information on the one topic, the ability to sort out which is useful information and which is quality information is really what we are talking about when we talk about information literacy.

We need to think about how we are going to do that as a community in terms of developing a continuum of skills so that we are actually working across the sectors to ensure that what is happening in the schools at both primary and high school levels is carried on and related to what is required at university. We also need to talk to the public libraries about the sorts of services and skills training they are able to provide the community at large. So there needs to be some more cross-sectoral talking about how we are going to do that. I think there is probably an opportunity there for government to assist either places like the National Library or ALIA to lead that sort of work in our community.

Mr Sayers—I think I am here today on the strength of a paper I did a few years ago. I would like to make a brief statement about the sector I represent. I am here today as a professional member of the library profession but I represent the special and research library sector and I come from a state government library. I think it is worth noting that that sector is a very large one. It represents a large proportion of the nation's information infrastructure and it is often overlooked.

I draw your attention to the cautionary tale that our own executives at times talk about everything being on the Internet and there being no need for corporate libraries or special libraries or research libraries because the mechanisms of government can access these through the Internet. We are finding increasingly, however, that these mechanisms are continually recursing back to the information professionals—the librarians in their departments, in their businesses and in the research organisations—for the sort of value-adding and the interpretive function that librarians have always performed in the analog environment and now, of course, in the digital one.

The other point that we caution our masters with is the fact that we work in a hybrid environment. At the moment nothing is completely online, just as nothing is completely analog any more. I would draw the committee's attention to the fact that the special and research library sector is a very large one. It is a very important one for the success of the nation economically and socially and, as Michael has said, the importance of the skills of those professionals becomes particularly clear when large decisions are hanging on the correct information finding its way into the hands of those who need to apply it.

CHAIR—Professor Bruce, do you want to add anything at this point?

Prof. Bruce—I had not actually planned to make a statement. The only thing that I might add at this stage, having listened to colleagues make their statements, is that there are a number of professions being involved in the development of the online library phenomenon, if you like. I am thinking about document managers, record managers, information managers and knowledge managers and all these people are possibly being treated under the banner of the idea of information professionals. The character of the online library is becoming very diverse. It is not only the external library that we might be familiar with; it is not only our research databases; it is also our internal records management procedures. So we are dealing with a very diverse environment when we are discussing the online library and the role of the information professional within that.

CHAIR—Thank you for that. Before I hand over to my colleagues, I have a couple of questions. Mr Middleton, I am interested in the issue of demand for librarians and their training. In particular, as I understand it the graduate diplomas are now full fee courses. The most recent DEST statistics show a continuing drop-off in enrolments. What challenges do the full fee courses have in terms of libraries and resourcing for the future?

Mr Middleton—My answer is based more on my experience at our own institution than at some of the others, which have had declining enrolments. Our bread-and-butter course is one that remained HECS based for a bit longer than a number of the others interstate. There was no effect on our own enrolments. It is now full fee, but students are able to use the PELS scholarship system. There does not seem to be any effect on our own enrolments. They certainly have not gone up but there has only been a small decrease this year, which is the first year that this has applied.

CHAIR—They were HECS liable last year, weren't they?

Mr Middleton—Yes. They were in the case of our own institution but, nationally, that has not been the case for some time for quite a few institutions. In terms of demand for courses, and following on from Christine's comments, for some time—for many years, in fact—we have felt that it is necessary to produce something wider in scope than a librarian based in a library—an information professional, in other words. There is demand as well from people outside the library sector for librarian type skills. We certainly feel, in our own case, that such people will continue to come to courses like ours to go into employment in those areas. At institutions interstate, some other faculties have mounted courses over and above library courses or independent from the library courses, with titles such as master's degree in knowledge management. At this point, we have chosen not to go that way but we still think that we are addressing that kind of market as well. There are people working in corporate and government

environments in particular using information and knowledge skills but not necessarily working in a traditional library environment.

CHAIR—That is a very live debate in the industry as a whole—whether knowledge management, information management or librarianship is the nature of the profession—isn't it?

Mr Middleton—Quite a few people are now scrabbling for territory too.

CHAIR—Yes. The other question I had from your evidence was that you spoke on the notion of a lack of national coherence of information policy. Could you be a bit more specific about where that lack of coherence comes in?

Mr Middleton—I cannot be terribly specific, but if we try to identify policy for students, for example, we identify the types of support for library systems that are made available at local government level. We identify the types of legislation at state and national level. I am referring to things such as copyright legislation, which will ensure that certain libraries get copies of material, and freedom of information legislation, aspects of telecommunications legislation and so on, which have had an impact on the provision of information. But, from a reading of those and from government policy statements that are associated with them, there does not appear to be much in the way of things that link them together and that say why they are there and how, together, they are useful in the library environment.

CHAIR—Mrs McCarthy, you talked about the absolute centrality of access to IT to be able to conduct a modern education—all the correspondence by email and so forth. You said it was the responsibility of the university to provide it but that students also need access to IT at home. Do you think that is almost a compulsory necessity for being a student now?

Mrs McCarthy—If you want good learning outcomes, yes. I know there are DEST issues and that we are unable to make it compulsory. But I think that students who do not have good access at home are at a disadvantage. No matter how hard the university tries to provide access—at QUT we have a ratio of one to eight students to computers—there are still queues and there are still students whose work rosters and family commitments just do not enable them to stay at university long enough to access materials. If they cannot do that, life is difficult for them.

External and remotely located students are another issue altogether that you might want to think about. What is the quality of the learning outcome and of the learning experience of a student who has been on campus, has used an online environment and has developed good IT and good information seeking skills compared with an external student who has not been required to do that as a part of their course? They both come out with ostensibly the same piece of paper, but do they really come out with the same skills?

CHAIR—Given the large number of online resources at a university, do you think that textbook costs are lower now than they might otherwise have been in the absence of those resources? That is a bit of a fishing question, and anybody can answer.

Mrs McCarthy—I can speak very personally about that: no.

CHAIR—The lecturers still put out the new edition every year.

Mrs McCarthy—Yes. There are still reading lists for every unit, and there would still be one or two textbooks to buy for each unit. As well as that, many lecturers put out what is called a ‘reading brick’—that is, a selection of copyrighted materials that we put together for the students. We pay a copyright licence to cover the copyright arrangements, but we still need to sell them to the students to cover the printing costs. You would still be looking at \$250 to \$300 a unit for a student to purchase books. If they are doing four units it can be quite an extensive outlay.

Libraries try to provide some of that material through high-use mechanisms and collections. But if there are 1,500 students in a core first year business unit, we cannot deal with the textbook issue. It is not the role of the library to deal with that. I do not think the cost of textbooks has come down at all, and all students need to access them.

CHAIR—Do you think that, in the longer term, the growth of online resources could result in the required number of textbooks coming down?

Mrs McCarthy—The concept of electronic books is one that is still quite new. At QUT we have dabbled in that area over the last couple of years with a company called Net Library, which is a US based company that has had its ups and downs. We were looking to get some high-use material in electronic format, which would have meant that we could have had multiple users for the one electronic copy. But the market is not there just yet for that. It could be in the future, but not in the foreseeable future. Caroline is probably more expert in that area, and she might like to add to what I have said.

Ms Young—You were talking about the cost of textbooks coming down because more things are available electronically.

CHAIR—Or the number of textbooks required.

Ms Young—The article I wrote was about the database we created at QUT for digitising the readings. That database has helped a lot but, really, it is pretty much a conversion of the reading brick into an electronic reading brick. The majority of the material, although we make links to articles in full text electronic databases wherever we can, has been digitised and it is not easy to read online. Most people will hit the print button when they are faced with more than a page or so of text, especially if it was born as print and digitised rather than being born digital. It is just hard to read. So maybe we are looking at converting books into prints. That is an interesting prospect.

CHAIR—Yes. The photocopy paper companies will be looking forward to that one, I would imagine.

Mrs McCarthy—And the ink cartridge people and that kind of thing.

CHAIR—Yes.

Senator MOORE—When we have been talking with librarians at a couple of places we have been in the last couple of weeks, I have always talked about staffing issues and training issues. You provide that, which is useful. One of the things we were talking about was whether there were enough trained professionals in the industry now. As QUT is one of the places that do offer the professional qualifications, what is your view about the volume and numbers in the profession? Looking at a country like Australia, with so many libraries, do we have enough trained professionals to fulfil the tasks?

Mr Middleton—To elaborate on what I said before, it kind of depends on how you define the profession. In relation to its broader definitions, I would say no. I think we could do with more. The answer to that may not be to train librarians; it may be to make professionals in other areas more information literate than they are. If we are talking about specialist librarians, I would like my colleagues to say something. My own feeling is that we are in a kind of steady state. We are producing them to the extent perhaps that they can be employed, but the institutions that are employing them would like to have the funding to employ more of them. However, they have not got it. We are producing to the extent that the positions that exist can be filled. There may be alternative views on that.

Senator MOORE—How about in the government sector, Mr Sayers?

Mr Sayers—I think the experience there is very much one of unmet demand.

Senator MOORE—That term is used a lot, isn't it?

Mr Sayers—Yes, it is. We often have difficulty recruiting base grade staff, simply because the positions we have to offer are not attractive because they are part time, temporary or casual. Despite perhaps the best will in the world, they remain so. I have someone on staff at the moment who has worked for me in another department and, since her time of graduation, which was at least five years ago, she has never worked in a permanent full-time position. This, at least in our sector, leads many to re-examine what they are doing for a living and really question whether it is the right calling. Regardless of their skills, they drift away from the profession into something that is going to offer them more security. At least for us, that is a big problem. We have a situation at the moment where another department I am aware of cannot recruit a library technician, for much the same reason. The problem is really one of not being able to offer these talented people the sorts of positions they are looking for and are deserving of. As a consequence, the nation loses that skill and it drifts out into the wider sector. I believe that they are being skilled well enough to go into other areas and contribute productively, but it may not be giving of what we really need, and they may not be really acting in the information value added function that they have been trained to do.

Senator MOORE—Do they tend to drift back?

Mr Sayers—Some do.

Senator MOORE—Is it common for people to drift back in?

Mr Sayers—I think it is, because sometimes it is a case of 'once a librarian, always a librarian'. I think they then move, as Michael said, into other areas, like knowledge

management. I agree with his comments. There is a bit of a turf war happening at the moment where you have private companies setting themselves up as knowledge managers and perhaps trying to lay claim to areas that they are not really qualified to cover. Those people sometimes drift into those areas and then come back. But the net effect is, as you said, an unmet demand.

Senator MOORE—What about in the academic stream—academic libraries?

Ms Young—Jenny has a portfolio with staffing in it, so this is her area of expertise and I will defer to her in a minute, but I would just like to comment that it is quite an ageing profession. We have a lot of people in the profession who are over 45 years of age. It might be quite interesting to see over next 10 years whether, as that population bulge moves through the system, more opportunities will start to open up for younger people to join the profession. We have to prepare for that—undertake some succession planning and be ready for that group to be coming through. I will defer to Jenny now.

Mrs McCarthy—We would rarely need to re-advertise a position. I am shortlisting for a position now and there are 16 applicants—

Senator MOORE—For one job?

Mrs McCarthy—For one job, and just on a first glance there are probably 10 of them who are appointable.

Senator MOORE—That is a good ratio.

Mrs McCarthy—It is. We are very lucky. So it is an employer's market. I think the issues that Mike and Richard have raised in respect of people being able to get full-time permanent work are significant in our profession. Because most libraries are publicly funded bodies, our budgets are exceptionally tight. I am not saying that in the corporate sector things are not the same, but from the perspective of a publicly funded body things are really tight. We do not have a growth in staff; we shrink our staff numbers rather than grow them.

If we want to do special things then we get project money to do them. We might put someone aside to do a project and then we will backfill on a temporary basis. Many young professionals are coming out and spending a lot of time drifting from one part-time position to another. That is a pretty unsatisfactory way to really get your career off the ground. We talk in our institution about perhaps taking a risk and putting on a couple of extra people instead of living from project to project funding, but that is a big risk for us and we are not really prepared to go down that path. So it is an employer's market, I think, and we are very rarely short of high-quality applicants. We have nearly always got several choose from.

Senator MOORE—Is it a mobile profession?

Mrs McCarthy—No, it is not a mobile profession in my opinion because it is very heavily female dominated and it is an ageing profession as well. People tend to stay in the job because if a couple are working it is a case of which one is going to shift and whether the pay is enough to make one person say, 'Yes, I will shift and take a risk,' and the partner can get a job somewhere else. Often, because it is female dominated, there are issues of child care and maternity leave,

which can interrupt careers. It is still female dominated, isn't it, Mike, in terms of the students who are coming through?

Prof. Bruce—Also older students.

Mrs McCarthy—Yes. That would certainly be my observation from the applications that I see.

Prof. Bruce—Most of them are coming from other degrees or are changing profession, so our average age is not very low; it is quite high..

Senator MOORE—So new entrants add to the issue of the ageing profession.

Prof. Bruce—The issue of the character of initial employment impacts back on the education and training options as well because students are very aware that they are not going to be able to get full-time work and they have to be very committed to come to us in the first place. It also puts great pressure on our courses because we are unable to show high full-time employment rates at the conclusion. It also jeopardise the position of the course within the university. Many courses around Australia have closed down because they have not been able to place full-time students.

Senator MOORE—Which puts more pressure back on the industry.

Prof. Bruce—Yes.

Senator MOORE—One of the other things we have been talking to librarians about is the changing nature of the work, particularly in smaller libraries where the librarian and the library staff become trainers. It is not always the librarian who does this but definitely the library staff do. We have been speaking with some very small libraries, so it often is the librarian who ends up in the online environment having a very hands-on relationship with their customers in just doing basic computer training in terms of how to use the new thing—possibly more so than teaching how to read a book; extending the process. Is that something you are aware of and build into your training component in the expectation of all your staff? You start off with the teachers and then go to the service and then to the academic?

Mr Middleton—I can be very brief about that. The answer is yes; we are very aware of it. We see things very much in terms of empowering so-called end users needing a stronger—

Senator MOORE—It is that the end user? I love it; I will use that. So it is the empowerment aspect to enable them to get the best use out of the system. That is a component of the training?

Mr Middleton—It also takes pressure off you so that you can serve someone else. In a way, any professional should be trying to do themselves out of a job all the time, but it does not work that way of course.

Senator MOORE—I would imagine that in the public sector you would have people wanting to learn how to best use their systems.

Mr Sayers—Very much so. I think this harks back to my previous comment where perhaps, despite the best wishes of executives, not everything is delivered electronically, it is not available through Google, so people are coming back increasingly to their corporate library staff—and this applies as much in the private sector as it does in the public sector—for the sorts of functions that, as you say, are instructional, facilitative and navigational.

There is another element that comes into play in both sectors—and I think it would be the same perhaps in the academic sector—where you might have someone paid at a certain level, perhaps higher than the library staff. I think the saying goes: why have a dog and bark yourself? There is a certain return on investment now they are realising that comes from having someone who knows what they are doing: entering the online environment and gathering, interpreting and dispensing to you what you require in consultation with you in a fraction of the time. The return on investment is much greater. I think there is a realisation now in some quarters that that is the case. That is one of the things that librarians and their kind have always delivered and it is now all the more apparent in an online environment.

Senator MOORE—What about in the academic area? Do you spend time helping and empowering students to get the best use—

Ms Young—We absolutely do, and not just the students but also the staff.

Senator MOORE—I think that was evident in one of the papers about how to encourage the academics to use the online process.

Ms Young—That is right. You have got the technophiles on the one hand and the Luddites on the other. You have got a sort of lag factor. There are people coming to libraries—

Senator MOORE—Derek knows which one I belong to.

Ms Young—who probably outstrip the librarians on the desk in their knowledge and facility with the literature. But there is a bunch in the middle that do not and there is a tail end that find it very hard. So you really need skills amongst your librarians that are at the very high end and also very practical and able to address the concerns of the people at the other end. We have got librarians who are working with academics at our campuses, helping them with the online teaching. They all learn together but the librarians are helping to address those issues and to populate the pages in consultation with the academics. Jenny has a little bit more to say on this.

Mrs McCarthy—I guess one of the things that has become really evident in academic libraries, in respect of the skills that we need librarians to have as a result of both the online environment and greater emphasis on information literacy skills development, is that we see librarians involved much more in formal teaching situations and in working with academic staff, as Carolyn has mentioned, developing the online course. At QUT we actually encourage our staff to do a graduate certificate in higher education. We have got 22 professional staff working in the area that would encompass this sort of training. Probably about six or seven of those have now either completed the course or are in the process of doing so. We see that as a really significant signal for the changing nature of the role of the librarian and the role of the librarian as an educator working in partnership with the academic staff.

Added to that there are other issues. We do skills training where we work in partnership with colleagues within the rest of our division, with people in the IT area and with instructional designers. We also work in an orientation situation where we have an integrated orientation program that covers information literacy skills, IT literacy skills and academic literacy skills, and our librarians teach across all three of those areas on a regular basis both at orientation and throughout the year. It is a very changed role for the librarian these days. They probably do not go near a book.

Senator MOORE—We had evidence yesterday from a gentleman who works in an Aboriginal and Islander capacity at the Central Queensland University—I have to not say ‘Capricornia’. He works on a project with students from Aboriginal and Islander backgrounds spread all across his area, and there is a special program there. I know QUT also has a process of encouraging Aboriginal and Islander students. He was talking about particular issues in terms of access to computers and also facility with computers, with an online learning environment for that particular student group. Do you have any experience in the area regarding particular issues in terms of comfort with and access to computers for that group?

Ms Young—There is an Oodgeroo Unit at QUT. We have not been teaching directly into that area. There are relations between the library and the Oodgeroo Unit. One of the things that is happening is that the online teaching pages are Indigenised—we are putting more Indigenous content into the units at QUT that are relevant units—and we are working that way. We have an Indigenous employment policy at QUT. I am the chair of the divisional equity committee, and one of the things we hope to be doing is working with the division of administrative services to implement that policy. We would like to see more Indigenous people working in the library, and I think that would be a big thing for making it a friendlier place and a more welcoming place for Indigenous students to use.

Senator MOORE—Mr Middleton, do you have many Indigenous people choosing to do the course?

Mr Middleton—No.

Senator MOORE—Mrs McCarthy, do your previous comments about access to computers apply to all students?

Mrs McCarthy—We do actually do some special training for the students in the Oodgeroo Unit. One of librarians works with them, so we do do that. We also have a young man of Indigenous background working in our library, and I found it quite amazing that, within a couple of weeks of his employment, there was a comment in the suggestion box to say, ‘Good on you for employing a Murri. It is good to see.’ It was from a student from the Oodgeroo Unit.

Senator MOORE—So they had noticed.

Mrs McCarthy—They had noticed. To me, he is just another young man in our employment. I was not aware of his background until somebody showed me this and said, ‘Isn’t it great that the kids have noticed? We really should be doing more of this.’ This has built on Carolyn’s comments about making a welcoming environment for them.

CHAIR—We will have to finish there, Senator Moore.

Senator MOORE—As long as you ask a question about copyright, I am happy to shut up.

CHAIR—I will just give Senator Tchen a go, because I know he will leave that bit alone.

Senator TCHEN—Actually, my first question is almost a comment; it may be a quip. I was listening to your response to Senator Moore's question about the education of librarians and employment opportunities, and the description that you gave of the employment and training area for librarians—and I am paraphrasing—as an ageing workforce where there is an increasing number of mature entrants and an increasing trend to part-time employment struck a note in my head. It described something else precisely. Can you get it? I see you cannot. It is the employment work force structure generally, isn't it? Is that actually a great disadvantage to you? If you have such a precisely good match, it should be a very good area for you to grow in.

Mr Sayers—That is potentially a loaded question, as I am sure you are aware.

Senator TCHEN—Look at it as a challenge. Do not answer it now. I just thought I might throw that in and see whether you can see that as a challenge.

Mrs McCarthy—It is a fact of life.

Ms Young—Can I comment on that. One of the issues is that, just as we said, if we make the library a more welcoming place when we have Indigenous employees, I think we make the library a more welcoming place when we have young librarians on the desk. We are a university library. A high proportion of our client group are young people. I think it helps us in our own understanding of our client group if we have young librarians there, telling us how they see it.

Senator TCHEN—Mr Middleton, in your written submission you say that you believe the library has the capacity to take on the roles of both safety net and leader. You also say that librarians have the capacity to take on the role of navigator and instructor. Are these matching roles?

Mr Middleton—Yes.

Senator TCHEN—In that case could you elaborate about how the safety net works? For whom is it providing safety?

Mr Middleton—In terms of democracy, I think one of its tenets is the 'right to know'. People have a right to know.

Senator TCHEN—Most people interpret that as the right to speak, not to know.

Mr Middleton—Yes, a lot of people do. People might realise that they have the right to know but do not really know how to go about exercising that right. Libraries provides an institution that makes it possible for them to exercise their right to know. That is the safety net as I see it. The navigator and instructor, as I mentioned before, help to empower people to exercise their own right to know.

Senator TCHEN—That might be a very good starting point for our report—the relevance of libraries in our online environments. That would be a very good line—that libraries provide a safety net for the community’s right to know. In the conclusion to your submission you recommend an instructional program whereby librarians could assist in raising the level of public information literacy. By that do you mean primarily financial support?

Mr Middleton—Yes.

Senator TCHEN—What sort of institution or sphere of government do you regard as best able to perform this role?

Mr Middleton—I would like to see it expedited at the local government level but I would not like to presume exactly how that would be done.

Senator TCHEN—How do you think it should be done, given that the current situation in Queensland is that public libraries are primarily funded by local government and in other states the state government has greater involvement?

Mr Middleton—Being expedited by local government does not necessarily mean that all the funding comes from local government. That is why I was looking for a more integrated policy at the three-tier level. If ‘right to know’ is regarded as a national priority, which seems reasonable to me, I cannot see why at a national level we cannot be funding support for that as well. But I would see it expedited at a local level.

Senator TCHEN—Finally, there is the question Senator Moore wanted to ask about copyright. I think there are two aspects to this. Firstly, a lot of the databases, the online information banks, require a copyright payment; they are limited copyright applications. How do we overcome this problem? We know there are quite a number—particularly of commercial information banks—which are licensed and only certain people can access them; they are not open to the public. The other question is that there is obviously a copyright issue in putting books and matters online.

Ms Young—I will tackle that one, and it is not a simple one. One of the great difficulties is that electronic databases, full text databases, are available for licensing. There are some issues about that, but the licence contract almost always stipulates that you must limit it to a particular group of your users; in universities, that is staff and students. In some instances they further limit them to a particular site, so that if you are multi-site you may only be able to make it available there.

The difficulty is that we are not able to extend that very far, because our capacity to make those databases available to our alumni online is very limited and it would cost a great deal more. Some of the ways around those kinds of difficulties would be to negotiate a national licensing arrangement. They do that in some countries of an equivalent size to our own. As I was saying before, if you do not make those available it means that, when people graduate, they lose access. It is not reasonable to ask every public library situation to be providing access to some of the professional, specialist databases that people will need. So it really is quite a difficulty. I think the only way that we will solve some of those difficulties is through national licensing schemes that make them more broadly available to people in the country.

Mr Sayers—Taking that to the next level, when those students leave the university sector and enter the work force, there is no guarantee that they are going to have access to that information because their employers, whether they are in the public or the private sector, are very unlikely to actually purchase that information, given the licensing costs that have to be paid to an ever-diminishing number of worldwide publishers. So what generally happens is that you either do without or you try and source it by various, usually nefarious, means—whether it is by talking to a colleague or whatever—often knowingly and sometimes unknowingly breaching copyright. As Caroline said, one solution—and other countries of a similar size have gone down this path—is to look at national site licenses or national consortia or, at the very least, infrastructure that would give those sorts of arrangements some form of succour so that they could establish themselves and survive. They could then deliver these online resources, not just to the students of the country but also, once they graduate and enter the work force, to the practitioners and those who are, if you like, adding the economic value to the country. I think that is the continuum that you see before you today.

CHAIR—I would like to thank the witnesses for their time this afternoon. It has been very helpful to the committee. We have had very good answers and some very interesting papers, which we will take into account in our final report. Thank you for coming in today.

[3.35 p.m.]

GILES-PETERS, Ms Lea, State Librarian, State Library of Queensland

McDONALD, Ms Vicki Gayle, Director, Client Services and Collections, State Library of Queensland

RISSANEN, Mr Arto, Acting Director, Public Library Services, State Library of Queensland

CHAIR—Welcome. Thank you for making the trip from Brisbane to be with us; it is very much appreciated. We have heard a lot about the State Library's work as we have gone around the state, so we are looking forward to hearing your evidence today. The committee has your submission before it, which we have already published. Would you like to make any alterations or corrections to that written submission at this stage?

Ms Giles-Peters—No.

CHAIR—The committee prefers all evidence to be given in public, but should you add any stage wish to give your evidence, part of your evidence or answers to specific questions in private, you may do so and we will consider your request. You are reminded that the evidence given to the committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. I also inform you that the giving of false or misleading evidence to the committee may constitute a contempt of the Senate. I now invite you to make an opening statement before we move to senators' questions.

Ms Giles-Peters—Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee. The State Library of Queensland's vision for the delivery of its range of quality services to the public and its leadership of an extensive public library network is closely linked to be delivery of online services. To get a holistic picture of issues, such as information literacy and access and the positive social outcomes of an informed community, the inclusion of libraries in the discussion is absolutely essential.

Our written submission to the committee addressed the five terms of reference but today I would like to touch briefly on some of the examples of the major issues regarding the role of libraries in the online environment, these being access and equity to services and content, training in information literacy, technology, bandwidth, infrastructure and community expectations, all of which have been spelt out in more detail in the State Library of Queensland's submission.

The State Library of Queensland's research and consultation has demonstrated that there is demand from the community for electronic delivery of information. Libraries including the State Library of Queensland are well positioned to deliver this information. Key issues to be cognisant of regarding information in the online environment include that information is increasingly being delivered online and, in many cases, we do not have a choice. This includes government information through to even TV shows that have their own web sites.

Australians are being encouraged to access online material and there needs to be consideration of equity issues in access to this information. Public libraries across Queensland span a huge area and serve dispersed populations. These communities include Indigenous communities, who are recognised as being particularly disadvantaged in terms of access to services and facilities. This represents unique challenges for the delivery of library services, especially in Queensland. We are responding to these challenges by tailoring our library services to the communities' needs. We have established five Indigenous knowledge centres in Cape York and the Torres Strait and have more planned for the future. Libraries, especially small libraries, are having problems balancing more and more demand for print material and also the demand for electronic services, often within extremely limited budgets. As a public institution serving libraries and individuals around the state, equity issues are a primary consideration for the State Library of Queensland.

The digital divide remains a real concern as the availability of broadband technology and even the reliability of power and telephone lines is a problem for many regional and remote areas. They are a number of areas in Queensland, such as Croydon, Burketown, Cape York, the Torres Strait—even the gem fields west of Emerald—which do not have an uninterrupted electricity supply and often rely on generators. For these communities, technology solutions need to be carefully thought through; technology and bandwidth are major issues. Access to reliable, effective and affordable infrastructure is essential to the delivery of online services.

I think we have heard much about information literacy and training but, in the words of the National Office for the Information Economy, which has responsibility for national policy in this area:

Access to computers and the Internet, and the ability to effectively use this technology are becoming increasingly important for full participation in economic, political and social life.

Libraries are constantly faced with community expectations regarding the delivery of online services. These expectations may well include instant access to information 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and a seamless interface to this information. Responsibility for the provision of services and resources remains an important issue. Libraries are largely funded at the state and local level, and of course their clients are not just local and state; they are global.

Some strategies which this committee may consider include a more consultative process in developing funding programs and policies, acknowledgement and funding of the ongoing training delivered online by libraries to support lifelong learning, improvement and enhancement of the infrastructure available to deliver online services, and the development of standards, especially for government information—things like access rights to information, the use of metadata and minimising the duplication of services. More collaborative projects are necessary, both within the library sector and across other sectors within Australia. Finally, the role of libraries needs to be broadly promoted and recognised as an accessible and affordable way to increase information literacy and to promote life-long learning for all Australians.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. Mr Rissanen or Ms McDonald, do you want to add any comments to that at this stage?

Mr Rissanen—No, I do not.

Ms McDonald—No.

CHAIR—We have received very favourable comment on the State Library's work as we have received evidence from public libraries around the state, so I would like to pass that on to you. It has quite surprised me, as a Queensland senator: I was not aware that the State Library did so much support work for the public libraries network. I refer to the OPAL program which you talk about in your submission, being \$2.3 million between 1997 and 2000 for the implementation of Internet-ready equipment. Is there state government money going into further expanding Internet access in libraries around the state?

Ms Giles-Peters—There is. We have requested an extension of that funding to continue that project and we are ever hopeful that that will be extended.

CHAIR—Just to understand this, there was \$2.3 million between 1997 and 2000—

Ms Giles-Peters—Yes.

CHAIR—and there has been money since then for content development, but there has been no new capital money for that.

Ms Giles-Peters—Not as yet. We are still working within the last of the current financial year's funding that we have.

CHAIR—But there has been since 2000 some capital money for new computers and terminals from the state government?

Ms McDonald—Not since the first stage when the PCs were rolled out. In the last couple of years the focus has been on other projects including training of public librarians throughout regional Queensland and content development, which has included what some of the previous speakers were talking about: statewide access to online databases. That has been the focus in the last two years. If we were to receive continued funding, we could then reassess the priorities.

CHAIR—Do you think there is a significant demand coming up from public libraries to the State Library for further terminals or access to those sorts of programs? Is that what the public libraries are telling you?

Ms Giles-Peters—In some cases the very small libraries that may only be open a couple of hours a week are the ones at the moment that do not have Internet access, but a number of them are in the process of looking at providing public access to the Internet and putting in the infrastructure and the equipment to do so.

Ms McDonald—It is also dependent upon the particular library. Some of these libraries are so small that fitting in another PC means moving a stack of books, so those things have to be weighed up against each other as well. Bigger libraries are probably in a better position to take on more PCs.

Ms Giles-Peters—I think it is also an issue of training the staff. Often staff in the very small libraries are unqualified and perhaps lack the skills and confidence to use the online information and to pass on those skills to their clients.

CHAIR—We had evidence from the librarian at Biloela yesterday, who talked about the amount of training of people, which she feels she has to do, for a whole range of computer programs. Even the local bank was referring people down to the library to learn how to access their bank's online system, which we found quite extraordinary. The notion of consortia has been talked about quite a bit and the ability to aggregate demand to bring costs down. We have had long discussions with our witnesses this week about the copyright problems in doing that. Public libraries have a lot more difficulty to some extent in meeting the conditions of the copyright owners. Can you see any way through those sorts of issues?

Ms Giles-Peters—There is a number of consortia that the State Library is part of at the moment. One is with the other state libraries and the National Library where we have negotiated licences for a range of databases that are accessible through the public libraries, and these are also accessible if you are a registered public library user for you to use the information from your own PC at home if you have one. That has been covered largely by the agreements within the licence and the copyright requirements. So any registered public library user in Queensland can access those databases where we have negotiated the licence agreement. The State Library itself has also negotiated a number of statewide licences for access to information through public libraries and also by individuals who are registered public library users.

CHAIR—Is that a difficult process? The impression I got is that public libraries find it much harder to negotiate those licence agreements than university libraries, for example, because of the different nature of the populations involved.

Ms Giles-Peters—Some of that may also be the different nature of the information. In the research and academic environments the demand for the information is perhaps less in terms of the number of particular users of a particular specialist information resource; therefore, the price remains at a very high premium. The sort of information that we are especially looking at negotiating licences for through public libraries is quite different in that it is more general. If any of the providers of information were to do their sums and work out, if we do not negotiate Australia-wide licences, how many of these might actually subscribe themselves, when you get down to the very small libraries, none of them would be able to subscribe to the sorts of resources that we are able to subscribe to on a broader national or statewide basis.

Senator MOORE—We spoke with representatives of the National Library a couple of weeks ago. They gave us some demonstrations of different things they work with, including the Kinetica network, of which they are very proud. Are you linked into the Kinetica process?

Ms Giles-Peters—Yes, we are.

Senator MOORE—Is it right that the regional libraries are often linked in through you?

Ms Giles-Peters—We provide library stock for council libraries where there are populations under 20,000.

Senator MOORE—We have been speaking to a few of those.

Ms Giles-Peters—In those cases we acquire the material, catalogue it and rotate it around the smaller libraries. Independent libraries such as Brisbane, the Gold Coast or Logan are members of Kinetica in their own right.

Senator MOORE—So it is the smaller ones, such as some of those with whom we have been speaking, that would be relying on your good graces for that process?

Ms Giles-Peters—Yes because of our role in the supplying of resources to small libraries.

Senator MOORE—The John Oxley Library is part of your network, isn't it?

Ms Giles-Peters—It is part of the State Library, yes.

Senator MOORE—We talked to the National Library about the ongoing digitisation of core documents and resources, and given the number of things that have occurred recently, such as fires and floods, it is even more important. Is any of the John Oxley collection digitised, or is there a plan for digitisation of those resources?

Ms Giles-Peters—There is, but I will let Vicki talk about what we are doing with our digitisation project.

Ms McDonald—We have just commenced digitising some of the material in John Oxley this year. We would have to acknowledge that we are way behind the other states in digitisation, mainly because of funding issues. So far we have digitised 5,000 images, and we will launch that site during Queensland Week—that is, Picture Queensland—which will then link directly through to PictureAustralia.

The items we choose are basically photographs that have been requested by the public, so we know there is some demand for them, and some other special collections that we have, so we do actually provide some access to other collections that have not previously been accessible. For instance, one of the collections is a Far North Queensland collection that we have had for over 10 years.

We have also commenced digitising some Indigenous material, which is quite significant. As part of that process, we are involved in developing protocols as to how that material will be digitised, accessed and those sorts of things. We are probably one of the first groups who have made the move to doing that. Also, this year we have started participating in the National Library's MusicAustralia project. We will be commencing as a pilot project with them, digitising music that we have in the collection, which is a fairly significant collection. I imagine that, depending on the funding we receive next year, we will move to some of the manuscripts as well, to make those accessible. It really comes back to a preservation as well as an access issue in making those materials available.

Digitising photographs can be pretty boring. What you need to do is build a story with them, and exhibitions. That is where we are putting a lot of our emphasis too—on developing virtual

exhibitions that build a story around the photographs and convey more information. They have been fairly popular as well, so we have done a number of those.

Senator MOORE—And that could link into the movement around the state of mobile displays and things which are very popular.

Ms McDonald—Yes. Some of the virtual exhibitions are complemented by the physical exhibitions, and there are several of them touring the state at the moment—100 Not Out, for instance.

Senator MOORE—You have heard people talk before on questions about the training aspect. As Senator Cherry said, there was some very positive feedback about the training courses run by the State Library and it being a genuine lifeline to smaller libraries that you provide. Is that a key workload for the State Library in terms of the training of your resources across the state?

Ms Giles-Peters—Yes, it is. The sort of training we deliver is complementary training to professional or, especially in the smaller cases, non-professional staff. Where we are changing considerably is in our approach to the staff in our Indigenous Knowledge Centres, where we are employing local staff with no qualifications and no experience in libraries.

Senator MOORE—You did mention earlier how many of those you had. Was it six?

Ms Giles-Peters—We have five and there are another three that we are about to open, with another three planned in the next 12 months. We have received funding from DET to be able to deliver accredited training to the staff in those Indigenous Knowledge Centres. For us, it will be the first step in looking at training up unqualified staff in our smaller libraries and it may well translate to being able to offer similar accredited training into our very small community libraries. For the small libraries, we offer training in Brisbane and we also take training out to the regions and sometimes quite specifically to the smaller libraries themselves.

Senator MOORE—Are the Indigenous learning centres focused in areas of high Indigenous population?

Ms Giles-Peters—The Indigenous Knowledge Centres are in Cape York and in the Torres Strait and in Indigenous communities. At the moment, we have two in the Torres Strait—one on Mabuiag and one on Erub—and we have them in New Mapoon, Wujal Wujal and Lockhart in the Cape.

Senator MOORE—That is good. We had evidence a couple of weeks ago from your counterparts in Darwin, who were talking about their experiences of building their network. They have a similar model. I think they may even call it the same thing—Indigenous Knowledge Centres—and they are using it as an education/community centre, to draw people into the learning environment. Is that the intent of yours?

Ms Giles-Peters—Yes, it is. We have a very close relationship with the Territory, and we work across the models. The intent is to work with the community to develop services that meet their needs. They can vary considerably from the more traditional library service to support

either recreation or training and learning. Many of the communities have quite a high percentage of their population enrolled in various training courses. We heard about the need to maintain skills levels once courses have finished. The council and the community see the role as being the provision of access to a wide range of information, including material that supports learning and, more specifically, training—for example, offering things like homework centres for kids. You will be well aware that usually homes in Indigenous communities do not have a lot of space for study or homework or access to PCs. So that role of the Indigenous Knowledge Centre is really important. But the communities also see the whole cultural revitalisation as being an absolutely essential part of the knowledge centres—that is, having access to what has been written or said about the community or photographs of the community but preserving their own heritage and information and developing new content out of Indigenous knowledge. So the role of family history and cultural revitalisation is another important part.

The third part is to support the economic development of the community through partnership and connections with the State Library, through our resources and expert staff. That applies especially in sourcing business information. If a community is looking to develop some new business entity, we will support them, through access to information, to assist in that planning and development of services. So we see the knowledge centres very much as being part of community development, socially, economically and culturally.

Senator MOORE—Is there any special funding attached to those?

Ms Giles-Peters—The state government has made a considerable amount of money available to develop Indigenous knowledge centres and Indigenous library services across Queensland.

Senator MOORE—Are you aware of any federal funding?

Ms Giles-Peters—Not specifically, no.

Senator MOORE—It is obviously on your future growth plan, if you have three more coming, to see how they go and to build into the future.

Ms Giles-Peters—Yes. Our long-term aim is to ensure that we have skilled staff in those communities and to create real employment for local people in the communities.

Senator MOORE—Your submission also mentioned other language groups and cultures. Can you elaborate a bit on what you are doing with non-English cultures?

Ms Giles-Peters—We have a very large centralised collection of books in languages other than English that is used throughout the state and is rotated, borrowed, through the extensive library network. More specifically, recently we have launched what we call our multicultural bridge site, which has translated into 14 community languages information about libraries and accessing information. It also links to foreign language newspapers and radio broadcasts. It brings everything together in the one place for librarians to better serve their clients but also for people at home to be able to access information in their own language.

Senator MOORE—So anywhere could get it physically through the mail, but anywhere that is linked up to the Internet would be able to access that immediately.

Ms Giles-Peters—Yes. The books are rotated. Anyone can request, through their local library, books that are held in our centralised collection. The librarians can request a bulk loan of the particular language that they want for their community.

Senator MOORE—The other thing that we have talked about in a couple of states now is the combination of library resources with Networking the Nation resources. It varies from place to place, but quite a few of the libraries we have spoken to in Queensland have some state government resources which are mostly OPAL—and I am talking about PCs—some more that have come and now a couple that have come through Networking the Nation. It is of interest to me that the Networking the Nation ones have a time line in terms of ongoing funding. Of the others, there might be five PCs and two might be under one management and three under another. Is there any kind of ongoing plan within the State Library to integrate those when D-day comes on the Networking the Nation ones?

Ms Giles-Peters—It would be nice to look at coordination at the front end rather than picking it up somewhere through it. I will use the example of the Indigenous knowledge centres, where there is a large number of federally funded projects happening up in the Cape and the Torres Strait, whether it is Islands Watch or the digital network—in fact, there are seven major IT projects—

Senator MOORE—That is today! You do not know what is happening tomorrow.

Ms Giles-Peters—We have been able to work across from the Far North from our Cairns office in trying to bring together and facilitate discussion between the various projects so that perhaps, instead of putting in another six computers, we look at the sustainability. That is where we see the knowledge centres being a very important part of the community. Rather than saying that the public access terminals go into the council office or somewhere and not be later accessible, we have negotiated that those terminals and things are actually part of the Indigenous knowledge centres. It would be ideal to be able to plan these things up front and say, ‘Let’s look at the longer term and certainly the sustainability of these projects.’ I think we are all aware of projects that have had very short life spans. Things happen and then they die, and the communities actually get quite fatigued: ‘Here comes another project where you’ve got the equipment but we do not have the money to employ people. The equipment breaks down; we do not have the expertise in the community to actually fix it.’ We are looking, especially in the Cape, to facilitate a much better working relationship and better utilisation of the funds and sustainability.

Senator MOORE—How does the state’s library get a voice in those discussions?

Ms Giles-Peters—We have developed and had accepted by the minister a statewide Indigenous library services strategy. As part of that, we employed an Aboriginal library manager, and I think that having that voice and having the networks to start with—whether it is through the Aboriginal Coordinating Council, the Island Coordinating Council, links through DATSIP, the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, Education or, of course, ATSIC—we have been able to ensure that we are talking to the major players and sitting at the appropriate meetings and tables so that we are able to better exchange information and start planning the better integration of the delivery of services.

Senator MOORE—Senator Lundy has a particular interest in the copyright issue. She had to leave, so I will try to do the question justice. In terms of a percentage of your budget, what would you consider to be the impost of the copyright restrictions and the various licences that you have to fund?

Ms Giles-Peters—I could not give you that information, but I can come back to you.

Senator MOORE—Just take the actual figure on notice. But are your concerns about copyright and the cost of e-data something that you do consider when you are looking at budgets?

Ms Giles-Peters—For us at the moment it is not a big issue. A lot of the material that we are digitising is copyrighted by the State Library.

Senator MOORE—You own it.

Ms Giles-Peters—Yes. Where we have negotiated access to electronic information, that has already been factored in to the licence. So, unlike previously with the academic libraries, it is not at the moment such an issue for us. I will look into it and come back to it.

Senator MOORE—That would be good. We are comparing it across the board. I do not know whether this is a question particularly for you, but I will put it on record. In discussion we had yesterday there was a particular concern that, in the enthusiasm for the online environment in libraries, the fact that material is not always online should always be remembered and that there will always be a role for paper and books and CDs and things. In discussion it came up that Queensland seems to be the only state where births, death and marriages are not online. Our services continue to be by microfiche, which surprises me. Is that something of which the State Library is aware?

Ms McDonald—I am sure that our family history people are very aware of it. We will take it up with them.

Senator MOORE—It is just an interesting concept that in other states you are able to do that. That just made me think that we did talk about the changing face of people visiting libraries—that online access may or may not change the people who visit. A very common response across three states now is that family history groups are very strong users of online facilities. Is that something that is shared in the Queensland experience?

Ms McDonald—They are a very dominant group of users within the existing State Library and very passionate about what they are doing. In recognition of that, in the new building that we are currently planning there is expanded space and increased facilities, and an actual family history centre.

Senator MOORE—They are going to start owning it!

Ms McDonald—That is great. At least it is people accessing information and using the libraries, and I suppose that then leads on to other things as well. Generally they start off with

their family history, and then they start researching the history of their local area and that sort of thing. It is certainly an area of growth.

CHAIR—When we were in New South Wales we were told about NSW.net, where the State Library of New South Wales assists public libraries in the costs of broadband access, which is obviously a big issue for public libraries. Does Queensland have an equivalent of that sort of program?

Ms Giles-Peters—No, we do not.

CHAIR—Has there been discussion of bulk buying or aggregating of demand in terms of trying to get better broadband prices for libraries?

Ms Giles-Peters—Not since I have been at the State Library. It is not something that we have discussed in any formal sense.

CHAIR—The cost of broadband has come up in quite a bit of our evidence around the country, and I am wondering what the best way through that particular issue might be.

Ms Giles-Peters—For some of our more remote communities it is not only the broadband access but the reliability of electricity and those things.

CHAIR—Thank you very much for your evidence this afternoon. You have been very helpful. I look forward to the new building.

Senator MOORE—What is the new building going to be?

Ms Giles-Peters—It is a redevelopment of the existing building—a doubling in size; a state library for Queensland!

[4.09 p.m.]

BAUER, Ms Louise, City Librarian, Caloundra City Libraries

HUNT, Mrs Melindie, Branch Librarian, Pine Rivers Shire Library Service

PESTELL, Mrs Rosalind, Chief Librarian, Pine Rivers Shire Library Service

CHAIR—Welcome to the hearing and thank you for making the trip to sunny Caboolture today. The committee has before it both of your submissions, which we have already published. Would either of you like to make any alterations or corrections to your written submissions at this stage?

Ms Bauer—No, thank you.

CHAIR—The committee prefers all evidence to be given in public, but should you at any stage wish to give your evidence, part of your evidence or answers to any specific questions in private you may ask to do so and we can consider that request. You are reminded that the evidence given to the committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. I also inform you that the giving of false or misleading evidence to the committee may constitute a contempt of the Senate. I invite each of you to make an opening statement before we move to questions.

Ms Bauer—First of all, on behalf of my colleagues, I want to thank you very much for the opportunity to address the committee. We appreciate that opportunity. Public libraries represent the community's primary access point to a comprehensive range of information found in diverse forms, including educational, social, recreational and other forms. The growth of e-action within our communities has impacted on the range of clients accessing online information and resources through our libraries. Improved online access for libraries is an essential component for the development of e-enabled communities and sustainable community capacity building. Affordable technologies can contribute to the development of an information-literate and empowered community into the new millennium.

Lifelong learning is something which libraries deal with on a daily basis. Lifelong learning can come in many forms and through both traditional and non-traditional processes. Public libraries represent a familiar environment. They are community spaces offering information solutions in a non-threatening package. For this reason we are very popular with lifelong learners. Growth in access to online information develops libraries' roles as information stewards—a role we take very seriously—guiding access to digital solutions such as portals. In this sense, libraries continue to offer traditional services in a non-traditional virtual environment. To achieve this, the development of a policy base for a national strategy to provide high-speed, affordable broadband access for local government would be appreciated.

Across Australia library use continues to grow, as I am sure you have heard often over the last few days. For example, at Caloundra City Libraries, visits currently have a growth rate of 10 per cent. We saw 600,000 people through our doors last year, which is an average of 1,500 people a day through our single central library, Caloundra Central. That is quite significant, considering

that the central library service population is about 25,000. So, as you can see, we are heavily used. I think that we also have the tools to enable us to provide online information across Australia. We have trained and committed staff and accessible central venues. We have the beginnings of technical infrastructure, which we can build on. Most importantly, we have community trust through our delivery of services to a very diverse client range.

To develop this potential fully, financial support from both state and federal sources would be appreciated. This could be provided, for instance, to develop equitable community technical infrastructure that delivers fast, affordable and reliable access, regardless of location. We find that it makes no difference whether we are in a rural, regional or city area—if people want online access, the location does not really have a great deal to do with it. Public libraries are struggling with the impact of costs associated with the provision of this sort of infrastructure, of upskilling library staff into the roles of community trainers to enable the development of effective broad based community education programs directed at increasing information literacy and also promoting libraries as learning centres. I know that within our library—and I am sure I am speaking for my colleagues as well—seeing libraries as the advocates for learning platforms across the community to help to develop an informed citizenry into the future is a very important focus.

Mrs Pestell—I do not have a written statement, but I would just like to acknowledge and say how much we appreciate the Senate's interest in the role of libraries in the online environment. The submission from Pine Rivers is fairly pithy. I would like to acknowledge that Melindie actually put that submission together, because I went off on leave just when you wanted submissions. That was lovely for me, but hard work for Melindie. I would just mention a couple of things. I feel that one-off grants for hardware, which I think Senator Moore brought up, are really of limited value because, in three years, you are looking for new hardware and it is really hard to find funding for that if you are a small library. So any help given to libraries needs to be looked at as an ongoing project, not a one-off. We all keep mentioning better infrastructure and the need for wider bandwidth. We talk about it being needed out in the country and in regional centres. I would just mention that Pine Rivers is on the border of Brisbane and we have terrible communication problems with our branches, which are only 20 minutes away from our council chambers, where the server is. So, to me, it is a nationwide problem, not just a regional or a bush problem.

CHAIR—We are also doing an inquiry into the network itself—a separate inquiry. The whole issue of outer metropolitan is one which we need to pay a lot more attention to because of the growth in those networks. I have a couple of questions for both of you. Flicking through your submissions, I am trying to get an idea of the extent to which you offer online access to the public such as numbers of terminals, how well they are used, numbers of users and so forth. Can you give me an idea of the sorts of services you are able to offer in terms of public access online?

Ms Bauer—We offer banks of PCs through all our libraries. Caloundra Central is our headquarters library and we offer eight free PCs there. We charge a minimal amount for Internet access; we do not charge for word processing. It is heavily used across all of our sites. We are looking at a new mobile library this year and developing it as a cybermobile so we can take those sorts of technologies out to rural areas such as Conondale and Witta, which are very low socioeconomic communities.

The service is very heavily used. I cannot give you statistics as to what the growth has been, but it is definitely a growth area for us. But, as our catalogues go online, our webpages become a key focus for libraries and that becomes a virtual space, which we also count as a virtual visit. Our virtual visits are skyrocketing. It is important to us that we present ourselves not only in a physical space but also in a virtual space, because that is where our clients are.

CHAIR—I am interested in your webpage development. What does that mean for the library's workload? Would that mean fewer people needing to come into the library to do their searches or is it going to increase your workload at some point?

Ms Bauer—I do not think it will necessarily reflect in fewer people coming into libraries because our visits, as I said, are increasing. People also access the service while they are in the library, but as a different kind of client. We see it as offering a package of information to our community. That is our role as information stewards. We are offering a learning platform, so our web sites need to be very snazzy and very attractive but also with as much information as we can put into them.

CHAIR—Mrs Pestell, can I put the same question to you: how much access are you able to offer at the moment and what are the usage rates?

Mrs Pestell—We have four branches and we have five PCs for the Internet at one branch and four at each of the others, so that is only 17 altogether. We have a webpage and we have our catalogue online, but that is about as far as we have gone. You are right, it is very demanding of staff time.

CHAIR—I am yet to open my own webpage, so I know how you feel.

Mrs Pestell—We are grateful to the State Library's webpages, which really are what we use more than anything for access to information online.

CHAIR—Do you have a nominal charge for usage?

Mrs Pestell—Yes, we charge \$2 a half hour for access to the Internet but, like Louise, we do not charge for word processing.

CHAIR—There is the whole general issue of the cost of access to broadband and putting in the hardware and maintaining it over time. I am interested in the role of the state and local government in doing that. Is that regarded by, for example, your council as a key part of your library's function which they fund?

Mrs Pestell—Rather grudgingly I think, yes. It is an expense which they know they have to meet, but it is a struggle with every budget to get more IT into libraries. We do not always win the battle.

CHAIR—Were the original 17 PCs as a result of a state government grant or the council continuing to fund more purchases?

Mrs Pestell—No, it was driven by the libraries gradually growing as the Internet grew and needing to put more computers in.

CHAIR—Would that be a similar story at Caloundra?

Ms Bauer—My council has funded all the software and hardware that has gone into our libraries. We are fortunate in that we have a network administrator dedicated to libraries. We work closely with the council and we are finding that is working well for us, but it is difficult. We were previously purchasing PCs and then leasing PCs. Changing from one format of paying to the other is actually quite difficult for local government. You put your hand up for a large number at once—we put our hand up for 20 PCs, for example—and it is a lot of money to be funded when you also have your hand up for a lot of other library activities as well.

CHAIR—What about the cost of broadband? Is that a significant issue for both councils?

Ms Bauer—It is significant for us running across our network. It is a cost which grows every year, as we have to have good technology. We must have good technology to be able to drive our whole service. It is a cost which we cannot contain and which is considerable for us. If we have a lot of Internet access through one of our more remote branches, such as Maleny, and there are a lot of people on the Internet there, that will slow down the staff's ability to actually access our network and even the library management system. Those sorts of small things become very tedious.

CHAIR—Are you connected to your various branches through a council local network or just through Telstra?

Ms Bauer—Through a network.

Senator MOORE—In both your submissions you talk about the training that you require and that you then provide. Would you let me know about the impact that has had on your workload and general issues in your library?

Mrs Pestell—I think the thing with public librarians is that they just accept the changing environment and say, 'Yes, if we're meant to be training people we'll do it.' Again we acknowledge the role of the State Library and Public Library Services, who have trained our staff.

Senator MOORE—Luckily their representatives are still here.

Mrs Pestell—Yes, and our staff are willing to take up the challenge, but it is a struggle.

Mrs Hunt—The branch library I work in has five staff full time. There are four PCs.

Senator MOORE—Which branch are you in?

Mrs Hunt—Kallangur.

Senator MOORE—So you are an offshoot of—

Mrs Hunt—Pine Rivers.

Senator MOORE—How big is that branch?

Mrs Hunt—In what terms?

Senator MOORE—In terms of the library. How many staff are there?

Mrs Hunt—Five full time.

Senator MOORE—Is there significant visitation by the community at Kallangur?

Mrs Hunt—We average about 13,000 per month.

Senator MOORE—It just gives us an idea about the number of people coming through the door. So you have five people full time—

Mrs Hunt—And four PCs and they are generally booked pretty much all day everyday.

Senator MOORE—Do you have a booking system?

Mrs Hunt—Yes, we do.

Senator MOORE—Is an hour how long people can have?

Mrs Hunt—Word processing is free and they can have the PC for an hour if nobody wants to use it. After that they can stay. The Internet is \$2 a half-hour and they can stay for as long as they wish to pay. But we are finding there are so many things now available via the PC. For instance there is Jobsearch. Somebody who does not have a job comes in, they are looking for a job and so they will use Jobsearch for that. They need to have an email address so that they can send off applications and so that people can respond to them. They need to be able to search different sites. There are a whole lot of different training issues for any user person.

Senator MOORE—From your observation, is people doing work-searching activities a significant usage of the machines?

Mrs Hunt—It is fairly significant. We do offer an hour and a half free for Jobsearch a week. We are finding that there is more and more of an equity problem as so much now is only available online. A lot of people used to publish brochures that you could easily pick up or used to publish books, encyclopaedias and so on. Now they are only available online, so if you do not have a home PC and you have to go and pay it is a lot harder for some people than others.

Senator MOORE—There is no Centrelink office at Kallangur, is there?

Mrs Hunt—It is at Strathpine.

Senator MOORE—So it would be easy for people in that situation to come into your branch and search for work?

Mr HUNT—That is right. The nearest train station is at Petrie.

CHAIR—We should have asked the Internet Jobsearch question of earlier witnesses. Would public access be an issue across all public libraries? I refer to people coming in to do a Jobsearch through the public databases.

Ms Bauer—Yes, it is very popular with us.

Mrs Hunt—Something I particularly appreciate every morning on the *Today* show is their mention of jobs. They will have a job of the week and so on, and they always mention that most public libraries have Internet access for people to look up jobs. I appreciate the profile that they give us.

CHAIR—There is no Job Network money for public libraries for providing that. We will take that one up with the local member.

Senator MOORE—You have your bank of four PCs there. Are those used a lot, in terms of your bookings?

Mrs Hunt—Certainly for the last couple of weeks, since it has been school holidays, they have all been booked all the time, all day.

Senator MOORE—You would expect that. Normally, are they pretty well booked?

Mrs Hunt—Yes, they are. But there so many different things that people use them for. There are also CD-ROMs. For instance, we were talking about family history earlier. There are a whole range of reasons people will use them, and a lot of them do need some help, at least in getting started. Then there are the problems with the technology, where the printer does not work or they want to change from colour to black and white.

Senator MOORE—That means that your staff then become expert in all the different things to do with computers: how to fix them, how to get colours, and all that kind of stuff for which you require all that skill to translate to the customers, the end users.

Mrs Hunt—We are about 15 to 20 minutes drive from Strathpine, where the IT support is, so we have to do as much as we can for ourselves.

Senator MOORE—Using Mrs Pestell's language, you 'just do it'. Mrs Pestell, in the Pine Rivers branch, do you have the same heavy usage?

Mrs Pestell—The same as the ones at Strathpine? Yes indeed. As Melindie said, they are in use most of the time.

Senator MOORE—And the Jobsearch usage is one that you have noticed?

Mrs Pestell—Yes, and we do have a Centrelink office down the road. But we do not know whether it is because we do offer an hour and a half free or whether, as it would be nice to think, the library just seems to pop into people people's minds as the place to come.

Senator MOORE—It is more comfortable. Ms Bauer, is it the same for you? Are your computers at different locations well used and booked?

Ms Bauer—Yes, they are. I would say that they are probably about 95 per cent used, particularly at Caloundra Central—that is our busiest branch—but Kawana would be one of the main ones. Kawana has about seven PCs. All branches have a free Internet PC which has a time limit on it. The other two branches probably have about four each. They are all heavily used, particularly at Caloundra Central, because it is located in the CBD. We have TAFE alongside us. We have a Centrelink just up the road. Kawana is actually next to Centrelink as well. They are really heavily used for all sorts of reasons, by a huge range of people.

Senator MOORE—Do you find that you have a lot of usage by tourists and people travelling through?

Ms Bauer—We have a lot of usage by backpackers. They might use the free Net terminal, which is the 15-minute one, but there is a lot of access by people using it for email. We have various community training programs which our staff offer. We have such a demand for them that we offer them through about three different levels of staff. As well, we partner with the local computer club, which is an extremely enthusiastic local computer club, and we offer training, sometimes specifically in email. It is perfectly common. I am sure Rosalind and Melindie would have seen it too. An example is a grandmother who wants to be able to email a relative who lives in Western Australia. That is purely and simply all they want to use the Net for, but that is still a perfectly legitimate use. They will come to a public library to learn that because they feel more comfortable. We offer one-to-one tutoring as well as very small group classes, whereas people might not choose to go to the trouble of enrolling in a TAFE course. That is what community learning is all about.

Mrs Hunt—It is the same thing with people who do not know how to use a mouse. So it can start from a very basic level and then become quite complex.

Senator MOORE—The issue has come up in a couple of our discussions that people, for whatever reason, find the library and talking to the person who works in the library more comfortable than accessing training courses elsewhere. The other issue we asked about in a couple of places was: do you have Internet cafes in your immediate access area? Are you in competition with Internet cafes?

Ms Bauer—Yes.

Senator MOORE—I thought you might be in Caloundra. How about you, Ms Pestell?

Ms Pestell—No, which is surprising. We have quite a busy business district in Strathpine, but we do not have an Internet cafe. Perhaps we could set one up.

Senator MOORE—As a money raiser! There is no pressure on the library from your competitors?

Ms Bauer—We have had pressure from one particular competitor, who set up virtually diagonally opposite the library. Of course, we were considerably cheaper. But we negotiated

that with them. It was not a major issue. We negotiated that. We had some of their flyers and, when we were completely booked, we would simply say, 'Would you like to try the cafe across the street?'

Senator MOORE—And that worked out fine?

Ms Bauer—Yes. It is interesting that in areas like Beerwah, which has the highest growth rate in Caloundra city, there is no Internet cafe at all. And even though Kawana is sitting right alongside a big shopping centre smack in the middle of Minyama, there are no Internet cafes there either; it is something that has just not developed in that area. Maroochy has more.

Senator MOORE—What about in Maleny?

Ms Bauer—Maleny has a small Internet cafe, but the Maleny community is completely and utterly resourceful in every conceivable way and they do not have issues with that. Our PCs are heavily used at the moment.

Senator MOORE—Do you find the people who are coming in to access the computers are different from those who use your other services? Is it a different clientele?

Mrs Pestell—That is a tricky one.

Mrs Hunt—We certainly get a lot of people who are not library borrowers only coming in to use hotmail in particular, especially young males who are often not big library users. That age group, 18 to 30, are often not library borrowers but they come in to use PCs.

Senator MOORE—Have you seen them drifting over to other parts of the library or is it just to the computers?

Mrs Hunt—Yes, they do. Sometimes it is forced on them because there is not a free computer for 10 minutes so—

Senator MOORE—They have to go and look at a book.

Mrs Hunt—We say, 'Why don't you go and look at the CDs while you are waiting?'

Senator MOORE—They are still comfortable—they stay?

Mrs Hunt—Yes; they often join.

Senator MOORE—How about in Strathpine?

Mrs Hunt—It is only anecdotal; it is only what you see.

Mrs Pestell—To be honest, I do not think I have been out in the public area enough to see it. But yes, I would like to think so.

Senator MOORE—How about in Caloundra?

Ms Bauer—In Caloundra, because we are in the CBD and we have a park alongside us, we have had some issues with youth crime; some of those issues have been in the library itself. But it has been an interesting process for us because some of these kids are virtually homeless and they have been in the library using the play station, which is like a magnet to young men—as well as email and any other Net usage. They like to use the Net. For us, it has been a really good process because we have encouraged them to recognise the library as a safe place, a place where they are welcome—within certain bounds, in some instances—and we have made them aware of what other resources are there that are theirs for free use. We have also devised various programs. For example, we set up a chess program and the young men just went for it—the same 15- and 16-year-olds we were having problems with now regularly compete in chess competitions. They are in the library until closing time.

Definitely we get different people. We get the backpackers we may not normally have attracted and we get the people whom we have been trying to lure into libraries for years who are a little bit harder to get hold of. Once they are in there, I find that they are aware of other resources; they might not automatically go for a book but they might reach for a magazine, they might watch the TV or they might read a paper.

Mrs Hunt—I think we are attracting some other users too from the other extreme. We have been talking about the ones who do not have PCs at home but we also have the people who do have PCs at home or at work, who are very technologically literate and who have discovered that they can access our catalogue online. They are starting to do that and they email us reference questions. Now that they can put on reservations from home, we are finding that that is happening quite a lot.

Senator MOORE—Do you have a booking system where people can reserve books or extend a loan over the Internet?

Mrs Hunt—Yes.

Senator MOORE—And in Caloundra?

Ms Bauer—Yes.

CHAIR—Do you think that will increase the demand for books over time?

Mrs Hunt—It already has, definitely.

CHAIR—That is excellent.

Mrs Hunt—As an example, I looked at the new Wilbur Smith a few days ago: we had 48 reservations on it and 12 of them had been placed online—25 per cent for that one.

Senator MOORE—That is significant. That is through the use of the web page and people finding it. Are your web pages linked to your city council web site—so you are a subset of theirs and people can key in and find ‘libraries’.

Ms Bauer—Yes.

Senator MOORE—Has the use of the web system has grown too?

Ms Bauer—Our virtual visits are really growing. I am sure that all libraries would find that as more of their catalogues are on the web.

Senator MOORE—I will now ask Senator Tchen's question about whether you have noticed any tension between groups of users—you have both identified that you have new users who are young men—in terms of competition for the facilities or anything like that?

Ms Bauer—We have seen some. It is an interesting process to watch, mainly because we have a particularly lively group of young users at Caloundra Central. There have been some issues in that people have said they are too loud or that they do not like the way they use the PC or that they do not like the way they use the PlayStation, because they tend stand together. Young people tend to want to stand together rather than to be freestanding.

We have explained to them the process we are going through with young people, that we are glad to see them there. We have explained that, yes, they do behave in a different way and that we will of course respond and ask them to keep the noise level down if that is required. Basically, it has been quite interesting. We had an instance where one of the young 15-year-old boys ended up teaching one of the older people how to use the Net, because they are so good at it.

Senator MOORE—That is success when you have something like that, isn't it.

Ms Bauer—That does not happen all day every day, but there are some issues. There are always people who tend to use the large print and the more traditional resources who might feel less comfortable with an online resource anyway, and they find the activity that goes on around those activities a little irritating—because there is a lot of getting up and sitting down et cetera—but it is not enough to dissuade them from using the library.

Senator MOORE—What about in your case?

Mrs Pestell—I think we must be a lot more staid than Caloundra.

CHAIR—Caloundra is a happening place to be, apparently.

Mrs Pestell—Yes, absolutely.

CHAIR—I think I might take my next holiday at the Caloundra Library.

Mrs Pestell—Melindie may not agree with what Louise has said, but I have certainly seen younger people helping older people. We do have some issues with them being loud, but I would say it is no more than when we have parents with young children who are very loud.

Senator MOORE—Are any of the computers that you have adjustable to allow easy access for people who may have eyesight or disability concerns? There are various adaptations you can get for people with disabilities. Are any of your computers disability friendly?

Mrs Pestell—No. We are well aware that they should be but we have not gone down that track yet.

Senator MOORE—Is that a funding thing? Is it because of a small budget?

Mrs Pestell—Yes.

Ms Bauer—Caloundra is fortunate that VIP NET on the Sunshine Coast has just been successful with a Jupiters Casino grant, and they are putting CCTVs throughout all of our libraries, and this year our council had a special project to fund accessible technologies in the libraries, which was fantastic. We had been asking for that for a while. People in chairs can get into the public access terminals at all our libraries, but this will enable us to have the larger keyboards, zoom text et cetera. But it is thanks very much to VIP NET, the Blind and Vision Impaired Network, for having the initiative. They have actually put them into all libraries on the Sunshine Coast now, so you might be next.

Mrs Pestell—That is brilliant.

Ms Bauer—Yes, they are brilliant.

CHAIR—Thank you very much; it has been very interesting. I have found this whole inquiry about what is happening in public libraries increasingly fascinating. I am reminded of Michael Moore's book *Stupid White Men*. I do not know if you have read it, but in the first chapter the librarians are responsible for the publishing of a book that Rupert Murdoch refused to publish. So I have never doubted the political power of librarians as a result. Thank you very much for coming here today, for your submissions and for your evidence.

Committee adjourned at 4.38 p.m.