



Information Overload

Issue 22, June 2004

Welcome:

Welcome to this month's issue of Information Overload. This month we will be looking at the problem of "doing more with less". I am of course referring to things like not having enough money to buy all the books and journals you need, to having to make do with the equipment that you have because there isn't any additional funds going around to replace old and outdated equipment, or upgrading the software you use on a daily basis. But we will also be looking at the problems of staffing – how do you cope when people are away sick or on annual leave, what happens when someone leaves and isn't replaced straight away, or when the unthinkable happens and your organisation restructures. Is it a case of re-grouping, tightening one's belts and carrying on regardless or do we chuck in the towel and get another job ourselves?

As always, if you would like to see us cover any other topics, we would love to hear from you. Just send an e-mail to training@iea.com.au. We would like to thank you in advance for forwarding this edition to friends and colleagues.

We hope you enjoy reading, have a great week.

In this Issue we will be looking at:

- Fighting the funding war;
- Journals pricing crisis;
- Philanthropy or just a Microsoft Marketing Ploy?
- Coping when you are down!
- A Thought to Ponder.

Fighting the funding war

Every year the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) publishes an analysis of the federal budget. They say this year it is a case of *Steady as she goes*' to describe funding for the arts in the 2004-2005 budget. Institutions such as the Australia Council, National Library of Australia, the National Museum of Australia, the National Gallery of Australia, and National Archives will all receive base funding, with no additional funding for staff increases. The NLA received a capital injection to build a storage facility that is earmarked for shared use by other national institutions. There is also a continuation of funding to be made available to the Educational Lending Right Scheme,

allowing writers and publishers to receive payments for books held in lending libraries. <http://alia.org.au/publishing/budget.analysis/2004.html>

Shadow Minister for the arts, Kate Lundy, said the 2004 budget had not delivered to the arts. Whilst she welcomed the additional funding to the National Library of Australia, and the extension of the educational lending rights scheme she believes that the Coalition Government had not done enough to support the arts. *Crisp, Lyndall; Mixed reaction to funding in budget. Australian Financial Review, 13 May 2004.*

According to a recent article in the WA Business News highlighted the answer is no, with the Western Australian Local Government Association and the WA local Government Librarians launching a campaign to raise funds for more books. WALGA president Clive Robartson said the WA Government had fallen behind in its responsibility to support public library services, which it provides in partnership with local government. "Local government provides library buildings, staff, technology and operating costs. The State Government provides the books," he said. "For many years

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State Government funding was responsible for a ratio of 1.25 books per person and allowed for 15% of the books to be replaced each year. Due to inadequate state funding, many public libraries have fewer books than is warranted by the size of their populations and too many of the books on the shelves are old, worn out and out of date."

Library book campaign launched, In Brief, WA Business News. March 2004.

Lack of funding has led to long waiting times on popular novels. President of the WA Local Government Librarians Association, Patricia Walker, says that ongoing funding is required to restore public library collections to an acceptable level. There are waiting periods of up to a year to borrow the latest John Grisham novel. Whilst libraries in WA received an additional \$10.3 million funding in this years state budget, (*Fleming, Katherine: West Australian, 10 May*) other states may not be quite as fortunate. In an article in *The Age* on the 6th May Robert Clark asks "Why has per capita funding to municipal libraries been cut under the Bracks Government?" (Robert Clark is the Victorian State Opposition's Treasury spokesman.)

<http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2004/05/05/1083635200837.html?from=storyrhs>

And in a letter to the Fremantle Gazette - Community Newspaper on May 25, 2004 reader and regular library user Wendy Markmann of East Fremantle laments the lack of funding for new books, saying that the "new book stand is almost always empty" she also says that the lack of turnover of books has led to most of the stock being "dog eared" and "tired" and is concerned that they are not replaced.

With the number of public libraries in Western Australia I have to ask – is an additional \$10.3 million enough to ensure an adequate supply of new material, especially if we want to ensure our libraries are seen to be the place to go for the latest information in addition to the latest best seller by the John Grisham's of this world?

Given, the huge growth in housing developments, and new suburbs being created by one of the largest land grabs since the original settlers laid claim to large tracts of land, and if Peter Costello's 9th family friendly,

"baby breeding" budget is to be believed, I would have to say no - \$10.3 million is not enough, inflation, bracket creep and the ever increasing costs of books and journals, this problem looks like it is not going to improve in the near future.

However, it's not all doom and gloom. Recent figures released by the West Australian Arts Minister, Sheila McHale stated that libraries were the second most used cultural venue with 43% of people surveyed having visited a library, although I do have to question – where did the remaining 57% of people go for their information – or is it a question of "it's all on the internet anyway.". *Arts popular in the West; Comment News 11 May 2004.*

Journals pricing Crisis

On 19th February 2004, an email was sent through the list servs, discussing the rising prices of academic journals and what the academic communities, and the people who write and contribute to these publications (usually without receiving any payment for their efforts) are doing to counter this The message is reproduced in full.

Motion re Stanford's Reaction to the Serials Crisis - 19 February 2004

Although the costs for production and distribution of academic journals are falling due to advances in technology, the prices of many (especially for-profit) journals have been rising much faster than the rate of inflation. This pricing trend puts severe pressure on Stanford's constrained library budgets.

Stanford has a practical and principled interest in the broadest dissemination possible of scholarly works, and the escalating cost of journals has the effect of limiting the dissemination of scholarship. It is ironic that many Stanford scholars like scholars throughout higher education volunteer their articles and labor in the production, review and editing of journal content, only to have the final product sold back to Stanford, sometimes at exorbitant prices.

Many for-profit journal publishers use the technique of "bundling" major journal titles with minor ones and further require multi-year contracts to lock-in revenue. These

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pricing strategies create more pressure on library budgets, thereby hindering the dissemination of scholarship.

Low-cost academic publishing alternatives, both traditional and innovative, do exist, many of which are non-profit. These alternatives serve the public good by enhancing wide distribution of knowledge, while simultaneously reducing the strain on library budgets. For all these reasons, the Senate endorses the following guidelines as recommended by C-Lib to all Stanford libraries, faculty and departments.

1. Faculty and libraries are encouraged to support affordable scholarly journals, such as by volunteering articles and labor in the production, review and editing of journal content.
2. Libraries are encouraged to refuse "big deal" or bundled subscription plans that limit the librarians' traditional responsibility to make collection development decisions on a title-by-title basis in the best interest of the academic community.
3. Libraries are encouraged to scrutinize the pricing of journals and to drop those where pricing decisions have made them disproportionately expensive compared to their educational and research value. Special attention should be paid to for-profit journals in general and to those published by Elsevier in particular.
4. Faculty, especially senior faculty, are strongly encouraged in the future not to contribute articles or editorial or review efforts to publishers and journals that engage in exploitive or exorbitant pricing, and instead look to other and more reasonably priced vehicles for disseminating their research results.

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http://www.indiana.edu/~cheminfo/chminf-l_support.html

As an acquisitions librarian for many years in both academic and special libraries, I have had first hand experience of trying to do more with less. Trying to balance the purchasing of those items the staff and faculty required in order to do their work against the budget that we were allocated to purchase the material. Every year we would be forced to cancel those journals that we could "do without" relying more on extensive literature searching, alerts and inter library loans, to satisfy the ever-increasing thirst for information. Yes the information might be on "the internet" but as I mentioned in the paper on search engines, the information contained in the "deep web" sources such as the pay as you go or subscription services such as Dialog and STN cannot be searched for and located in the traditional search engines of the World Wide Web. Because "Dynamically generated content such as directory listings, exist only in a database, and the "results" only construct when you have asked a direct question of the sites own search engine. If you have ever used online telephone directories (whitepages.com.au) you will know what I mean. Databases such as these are known as "the invisible web" or "Deep Web" and are rarely if ever found within the surface web domain of the search engines." *If you missed the search engine optimisation paper we issued a couple of months ago and would like a copy, please email me and I will make sure you receive a copy.*

Philanthropy or just a Microsoft Marketing Ploy?

Few would argue that if it wasn't for people like Andrew Carnegie, the public library system would not be what it is today. It is said that Carnegie built 2,811 free libraries in all. Of these, 1,946 were located in the United

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States – at least one in every state except Rhode Island -- 660 in Britain and Ireland, 156 in Canada. A handful of libraries were also scattered in places like New Zealand, the West Indies and even Fiji.

Whilst this is quite an achievement, Andrew Carnegie could not have succeeded in his task without the support of the communities. As with just about every deal Carnegie made, there were strings attached. Carnegie offered interested towns enough cash to build the library, usually offering a stipend of about \$2 per resident. In return, the town had to agree to shell out an amount equal to 10 percent of that gift each year for upkeep, utilities and books.

<http://andrewcarnegie2.tripod.com/hadtoask292000.html>

In today's culturally rich environment, it is surprising to find that we still rely on philanthropists and the communities at large to provide what could be termed "basic services".

A question - How many of you have access to the Internet at home? Hmm quite a few...not surprising when it has been said that Australians are the fastest to take on and exploit new technology. "As of the end of 2003, Australia had 727,440 broadband subscribers, and it's predicted that by 2008, 13% of the population, or 2.8 million people, will be hooked in" *IBC Newsletter, June 10, 2004.*

In America, the "land of opportunity" the term "digital divide" was coined when a study conducted in 1996 discovered that only 28% of all public libraries had PC's for public access to the Internet. Just 8 years later, the number has grown to 95%. The difference? Well it could be argued that the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation accelerated the trend. According to a report in the New York Times, since 1998, the foundation has installed or paid for more than 47,000 PC's of the 120,000 currently connected to the Internet in American Public Libraries. The report also goes on to state, that a public library could only qualify for a grant if the community it served had a population of at least 10% under the federal poverty line.

Critics of the program do say that it is a Microsoft marketing exercise masquerading as philanthropy. Whilst the foundation does not

require recipient libraries to use the Window's suite of products, 83% of libraries have opted to purchase the software recommended by the foundation.

What is interesting to note is that only libraries with an active community can hope to maintain and upgrade the computers. Whilst the foundation has shifted away from providing computers to providing \$2 for each \$1 raised in a bid to help with the problem of software and technological obsolescence. Is this a case of Microsoft creating the problem then offering to fix it?

Those with communities who do not value the public library service and do not use it on a regular basis will not be interested in fund raising to maintain the service. The *report "Toward Equality of Access: The Role of Public Libraries in Addressing the Digital Divide."* States that "more than 40% of Americans still do not regularly use the Internet, and many cite barriers to access and a lack of skills as the reason." Internet use among African Americans (39.8%) and Hispanics (31.6%) substantially trails that of whites. Families with incomes below US \$25,000 report much lower Internet use (around 30%) than those at higher income levels (around 70%). Whilst the work done by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has helped to achieve some success with the battle to get libraries wired and used, the war to retain access with the ever spiralling technological costs is only just underway.

Lohr, Steve; Libraries Wired and Reborn. The New York Times, April 22, 2004. Additional information taken from the report "Toward Equality of Access: The Role of Public Libraries in Addressing the Digital Divide."

www.gatesfoundation.org

Coping when you are down!

It is a rare organisation that does not have staffing problems on a daily basis. With illness, maternity leave, annual leave and sabbaticals to take into account, most organisations rarely if ever, operate at full staffing capacity. The larger the organisation is, the more likely it will be that there will be a small percentage of people who are not at work on any particular day. If that is the case, then it should come as no surprise that most organisations will re-structure at some point during their operational lifetime to ensure that the right

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number of people are doing the work that is available. Whilst this may sound like an over simplistic exaggeration, the truth of the matter is that at some point in every person's working life time they will undergo, or be a part of a down-sizing, right sizing, redundancy program. During my 20-year career in librarianship I have been subjected to a hostile take-over (the company that took over us, was subsequently taken over), a corporate collapse (due to the bottom falling out of the commodities market) and a merger. I am sure most other people will have similar stories to tell. The question is how do you carry on regardless, when all around you chaos reigns?

Whilst it is relatively easy to pick up additional work if a colleague is away on holiday or on sick leave, or if a person leaves and the gap cannot be filled straight away, most people will find something in their capacity to do a bit more (to help out). This is usually because most people can work over capacity for short periods of time, especially if they can see the light at the end of the tunnel. However, some times if a position cannot be filled straight away, a decision may be taken to keep the position vacant. Whilst the work is still there, the "person" isn't and "Natural Attrition" takes place. Effectively downsizing an organisation by not replacing people when they leave. Of course management is then able to use this strategy to increase workloads whilst effectively reducing wages and other overheads. Whilst Natural Attrition is a form of "down sizing" by stealth, being made "redundant" is far more stressful for all parties concerned. Handled correctly, downsizing an organisations workforce can have positive

ramifications for the people who are left behind. Handled badly and the remaining workforce may wonder if it would be better to find another job before they too are dismissed.

Redundancies can be caused by some (or all) of the following reasons:

- Internal re-organisation;
- Change of business emphasis;
- Withdrawal from a market or product;
- Cost cutting (included in this are organisations who use redundancies to improve shareholder value);
- A merger or acquisition or
- Technology development.

The impact can be minimised with some careful planning and consideration and should cover:

- How to minimise the stress and strain on those who are leaving the organisation;
- How to promote a corporate image of care and concern; and
- How to minimise the impact on morale and motivation of those people who will be staying with the organisation.

Unfortunately in today's cost cutting, technologically driven market place, this is yet another issues that is simply not going to go away.

We hope you enjoyed reading, have a great week.

A T hought to Ponder:

"Most human beings have an absolute and infinite capacity for taking things for granted."

Aldous Huxley

Your comments and suggestions on the subject of this newsletter are most welcome. Or if you would like to see other issues covered in future editions, please email training@iea.com.au

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