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**'Digital discovery; strategies and solution', IATUL Conference 2008.**

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Information Systems and Library Services

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# 'Digital discovery; strategies and solution',

IATUL Conference 2008,

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In April, I was lucky enough to travel to New Zealand to participate in the International Association of Technological University Libraries (IATUL) Annual Conference, which was held at Auckland University of Technology (AUT). Arriving late, due to a typhoon in Hong Kong, I went straight into the conference which began at the AUT *Marae* (Meeting house). The *Powhiri* (Maori welcome) made me aware of how strong the Maori culture is in New Zealand, especially in libraries.

The theme of the conference was inspired by the New Zealand Digital Strategy and its goal to create a digital future for all New Zealanders, using the power of information and communications technology. There were over 200 delegates (librarians, IT staff, publishers and electronic service providers) from all over the world, but especially Australia, New Zealand and the USA. As this was an intensive four day conference, I have selected, what were for me, some of the highlights.

The keynote speaker on the first day was Paul Ayriss, University College London (UCL). It seemed strange to go to the other side of the world to hear a speaker from a neighbouring institution, but it was an interesting presentation, examining the role and content of digital strategies in European research libraries, with special reference to UCL. He summarised the development of Open Access, highlighting European schemes such as SHERPA and DART-Europe. He then discussed digital preservation collaborations, including LIFE and UK Research Data Services. Paul stressed the importance of pervasive information literacy and fluency programmes in equipping our users to cope with developments in information technology, and the need for further research into user perceptions of e-books.

Similar presentations highlighted digital strategies in New Zealand (Penny Carnaby, Director of the National Library), USA, Germany and Canada. Hannie Sander, University of Johannesburg, gave a wonderful presentation on the 'Long walk to digital freedom' in South Africa. Using Nelson Mandela's life and achievements as an inspiration, Hannie discussed the important role of libraries in addressing the challenges in the emerging economy of South Africa, describing how committed individuals had worked together to enable all South Africans to access information. Another very interesting presentation by Erika Linke, Carnegie Mellon University, discussed a collaborative digitisation project involving American universities and institutions in China and India. Between 2004 and 2007 1.4 million books were sent from the USA to China and India for digitisation to create a free to read digital resource. The day ended with a reception at the Auckland War Memorial Museum, where we were entertained by a Maori *kappa haka* (singing and dancing) group.

The second day concentrated on research discovery, with presenters, mainly from Australia and New Zealand, discussing support for researchers and institutional repositories. Many of their institutional repositories include PhD theses, and Master's dissertations, and they are considering holding undergraduate projects. Judy Stokker, Queensland University of Technology (QUT), explained how Australian university libraries are addressing the challenges posed by changes in scholarly publishing and communication and e-research. Collections are changing rapidly and libraries need to work with other university departments to train researchers in data management skills. QUT has established e-research access co-ordinator posts – librarians who work outside the library, co-ordinating library support for researchers, promoting e-prints and open access publishing, and curating research databases.

In the afternoon we had guided tours of some of the University of Auckland libraries. I visited the Information Commons which offers computing facilities and study areas with support and training for IT, information and English language skills. Throughout the conference there were opportunities to look around the AUT Library, where a bank of computers in the open access IT area was reserved for conference delegates. The AUT City Campus Library seats 1,000, has a postgraduate study room with a meeting area, 14 study rooms, including one equipped with adaptive technology and a child friendly parents room with toys, a

DVD player and children's books. The library is decorated with Maori art and artefacts and all the signage is in Maori and English.

The next day was a study tour to Waitangi, in the Bay of Islands. Waitangi is the historic site where a treaty was signed between Maori chiefs and representatives of Queen Victoria, forming a constitutional relationship between Great Britain and the Maori and non-Maori people of New Zealand. We visited the Treaty House and listened to a keynote address from Evelyn Tobin on the Digital strategy and *Matauranga Maori*. Evelyn is a member of the Library and Information Advisory Commission and Komiti Maori, which advises the Minister for the National Library on library and information services and their role in the cultural and economic life of New Zealand. *Matauranga Maori* is the knowledge and understanding of everything in the universe, including language and traditional knowledge. How *Matauranga Maori* is recorded and disseminated is changing with the digital revolution. Evelyn sees librarians as gate openers, leading digital opportunities in New Zealand through such schemes as the Aotearoa People's Network in public libraries.

On the way back to Auckland we visited the award winning public library at Whangarei. Outside the library are the *Pou*, ten multicultural poles recognising the different cultural groups in the area, and the importance of libraries to them. This stunning new building was opened by the Prime Minister in 2006. It has special collections in Maori culture, New Zealand history, government information and genealogy as well as fiction and non-fiction, music and video collections, Playstation games, magazines and jigsaws. The library also offers homework clubs, pre-school fun sessions and holiday programmes for children. Wheelchairs and shopping trolleys are available for use in the library. The local community is very proud of the library, and our guide was horrified when I asked if they were ever affected by local government funding cuts. 'The public would not let them', was his reply.

The day ended with dinner at the Ascencion Vineyard in Matakana, where we were able to sample their excellent wines, courtesy of the National Library of New Zealand.

The theme of the final day was learning discovery, beginning with an inspiring presentation from Joan Lippincott, Coalition for Networked Information, Washington, on 'Web 2.0 for learning discovery'. She described the work of the coalition

and its role in assisting librarians to prepare students for the twenty first century – re-orientating library content, tools, services and environments. Joan highlighted examples of innovative library projects from all over the world. She concluded that it is the librarian's mission to enable students to make the transition from the recreational use of technology to its academic use by providing environments (physical and virtual) which engage students and promote creativity in their work.

Helen Livingston, University of South Australia (UniSA) spoke on the future of interlibrary loans (ILL) in 'It's been ILL for a long time, is it close to death?'. The high cost of ILLs, especially the need for investment in ILL systems and high staffing costs led UniSA to adopt a policy of buying all ILL book requests, using 'print on demand' services and internet booksellers.

Ellen Safley, University of Texas at Dallas, discussed her research into how students use library catalogues in 'Discovering the library; finding the hidden barriers to success'. Library catalogues have become online equivalents of card catalogues, which students never understood. Librarians should be looking at online retailers catalogues, such as Amazon. Even students who have participated in library induction training do not understand library terminology (e.g. 'on hold') or punctuation (e.g. '1994-'). As a result, they bypass the catalogue for journals, looking just at the electronic A-Z list and so only using a fraction of library resources, and submitting ILL requests for items held by the library. Changes were made to the catalogue at Texas, including adding a 'More like this' feature and replacing 'Set search limits' with 'Narrow my search'. Overall, library systems should be able to interpret a search and help students to find the information they need. Flexible interfaces are needed to make library catalogues easier to understand, so students no longer need to be taught how to use them.

On this final evening, we enjoyed the conference dinner at Fale Pasifika (Centre for Pacific Studies), University of Auckland. The 2009 IATUL Conference 'Quality through innovation' will be held at the Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven, Belgium, from 1-4 June. Proceedings of the 2008 conference can be found at <http://www.iatul.org/conferences/pastconferences/>.