

Reference Co-Operative Report for Viclink

April 2001.

Last year we undertook to review the adequacy of the quarterly Reference Surveys. The survey was originally developed about 10 years ago to measure the impact of the VCE on public libraries, and due to changes in the school curriculum is no longer valid. Over the same period massive changes have occurred in information technology which have had direct bearing on public library services, especially in the area of information provision. The working party of six reference Co-Operative members, with Jane King as facilitator and Graham Dudley overseeing the process produced a report on "Measuring Reference Services". This is an ongoing process and as the first step we ran an Internet survey in March, based on the one Leneve Jamieson had designed. A proposal to run workshops this year to explore ways of assessing use of information Technology is being considered by Graham Dudley and the Department of Infrastructure. The Final Report by Jane King is available on the Infonet, and I have also attached the overview of the process as page 2 of this report.

The Reference Co-operative also responded to the Australian Bureau of Statistics in support of the Libraries Extension Program which seemed to be under threat. All our members felt that this was a valuable and unique program which offered general community access key ABS material.

At our next meeting at Frankston Library on May 7th, we will have speakers from SLAV to lead a discussion on how school and public libraries can improve their co-operation.

The Reference Co-operative quarterly meetings are always well attended, and we find both the meetings and the Discussion list a valuable way of exchanging information and ideas. The minutes of the meetings are available on the Infonet.

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**DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE – LOCAL GOVERNMENT
DIVISION
VICLINK – REFERENCE CO-OP**

**Notes from Meeting held 10.00 am Friday 13th October 2000
Local Government Division, Department of Infrastructure, Level 19,
MEASURING REFERENCE SERVICES**

Draft Report on developing a framework to measure reference surveys

The report had been circulated to members of the Reference Co-operative Group. No comments had been received at the time of the meeting.

Where to from here

In broad terms the next steps should be

1. To develop the “information profile” methodology (market research)
2. Define level of service to be offered
3. Marketing the service
4. Measuring the effectiveness of the service

In the short term

For the time being it was thought advisable to continue the current quarterly reference surveys. The working group also felt it important to proceed with the development of 5-6 pertinent questions in the short term, for use in surveying the effectiveness of reference services. These should relate generally to staff, resources and information technology, and if the enquiry had a satisfactory conclusion. Investigation into the reasons why an enquiry was unsuccessful would also be useful information to gather.

Information technology use was seen to be the area where least is known but is an increasingly expensive area to maintain and develop. As there is no simple way of measuring information technology at present, it was suggested that libraries could look into how their Internet access computers are currently being used. For instance, to ask users which databases (if any) they are interrogating. This could be done in a general subject or purpose driven selection manner. The information gathered would be very useful in developing options to explore on a state-wide basis. Email use could also be investigated (eg personal communication or part of a course work for distance education, buying something, paying an account, etc.)

In the longer term

It was proposed that a number of workshops be held early next year across the State (eg at Benalla, Traralgon, Ballarat, Sunshine, Dandenong) to explore ways of assessing using of the information technology resources. A proposal will be developed for submission to the Local Government Division.

