

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

The Institute's Communication and Information Program aims to improve public understanding and inform the policy process about factors affecting marital and family wellbeing through a comprehensive communication and information strategy.

The program is responsible for undertaking activities and achieving outcomes related to the broad communications objectives outlined in the Institute's *Strategic Plan 2002-2005*. As such, it is responsible for promoting the Institute, its role, research, products and capabilities. In the main, this is done through: publishing and disseminating Institute research; providing library and bibliographic services; maintaining and updating Internet and Intranet information; organising conferences and seminars; and coordinating media liaison.

The program also develops and maintains networks and resources, and provides print and electronic publishing services to support the National Child Protection Clearinghouse, the Stronger Families Learning Exchange, and the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault.

Review of the program

In January 2004, the Institute commissioned Fenton Communications to undertake a review of the Institute's communication and information activities. The purpose of the review was to provide the Institute with information, including stakeholder feedback, to enable the Institute to ensure the quality of its communication and information services, and to effect further improvement and plan future activities.

The terms of reference for the review focused on outcomes aligned with the objectives and activities in the Institute's Strategic Plan. Having regard to the role, size and budget of the Institute, the reviewer was asked to undertake a comprehensive examination of the group with a view to:

- developing appropriate criteria by which the quality and effectiveness of the Institute's communication and information services can be measured;
- assessing whether current communication and information services achieve the stated objectives of the Institute's Strategic Plan;
- identifying any significant gaps or inefficiencies in the organisation's communication and information services;
- reviewing the effectiveness of processes and procedures in each area of work;
- reviewing the appropriateness of the current budget allocation for communication and information, and the efficiency with which existing budgetary and staff resources are used;
- identifying the most suitable internal structure and working arrangements to effectively achieve the Institute's communication and information objectives; and
- advising the Institute on future program planning, human resources, and infrastructure needs.

The review examined each sub-program, as well as the program as a whole. Valuable feedback was received on the program areas, and on matters related to the Institute's research, profile and role. The review was completed in June 2004, and a report has been received. The Board will consider the review's recommendations early in 2004-2005.

Publishing

One of the most visible outputs from a research agency is its contribution to the literature. Throughout 2003–2004 the Institute continued to publish relevant and timely information in the area of family research.

The publishing program includes the Institute's research journal *Family Matters*, and titles published under the Institute imprint in its series publications. In addition, research undertaken by Institute staff, or by external researchers using Institute data, is published in Australian and overseas journals and conference proceedings, or appears in major Institute reports.

To ensure the maximum reach and widest possible readership for Institute publications, most material published in print form is also published electronically on the Institute's website. This occurs simultaneously in the case of free publications, or subsequent to initial publication in the case of the subscription-based *Family Matters*.

In accordance with the Institute's long-held aim of presenting published material in a clear, accessible and attractive style, publications continued to adopt the highest editorial and design standards.

Re-badging Institute publications

A major task achieved during the year was the redesign of the Institute logo on all publications, websites and stationery in accordance with the Australian Government's regulations announced in July 2003. The new corporate livery, chosen to show the logo to good advantage and to showcase Institute products, is simple but distinctive, in tones of black, beige and orange. It is hoped that this "new look" will soon become widely known and readily recognisable.

Publishing review processes

Again this year, works were published in accordance with the Institute's established publishing review policy. This policy, formulated and monitored by the Institute's Publications Committee, requires that drafts of all proposed new titles undergo rigorous internal and external review.

Drafts are reviewed in-house by the Director and the Deputy Director (Research), and by other researchers with particular expertise in the area relevant to the publication. In addition, each proposed new title is reviewed by independent external reviewers, who are asked to refer to the Institute's *Guide for External Review of Manuscripts* in preparing their evaluation reports.

Acceptance of all *Family Matters* material is subject to a formal review and assessment process, with reference to the Institute's *Criteria for Acceptance of Family Matters Articles*.

Family Matters journal

The research journal *Family Matters* is the Institute's main dissemination medium, its primary purpose being to keep its local and international readership informed about Institute research and activities. Thus the Institute places a high priority on its own research contribution to each edition.

It is also the role of *Family Matters* to keep its readership informed more generally of relevant family-related research by publishing articles from other Australian and

overseas sources. In accordance with this policy, in 2003-2004, *Family Matters* continued to publish the work of external authors as well as reporting directly on Institute work.

Although designed to be accessible to a broad readership, *Family Matters* is a fully refereed academic journal, which is recognised by the Department of Education Science and Training for the purposes of Research Data Collection, and is included in the Register of Refereed Journals. The Institute holds copyright to all articles published.

The content of *Family Matters* provides a diverse range of perspectives and analyses of family research and policy options. In addition to research articles, regular columns include analysis of family trends, information and discussion of new developments in family law, and expert opinion/comment on family-related topics. Readers' letters to the editor are welcomed and may be published in *Family Matters*.

Family Matters is published three times a year, in Winter, Spring/Summer and Autumn.

- *Family Matters*, no. 65, Winter 2003 (80 pages) contained a diverse body of family research highlighting the wellbeing and best interests of children. Included were articles on: family transitions among Australia's children; child care arrangements during school holidays; recognising child abuse on the internet; and parent effectiveness training. *The edition included six major research articles authored or co-authored by Institute researchers.*
- *Family Matters*, no. 66, Spring/Summer 2003 (72 pages) focused on the issue of ageing. Included were articles on: the diversity of the ageing population; the value of unpaid work of older Australians; the role of families in an ageing society; and an analysis of HILDA data to examine ageing, living arrangements and subjective wellbeing of older people. *The edition included four major research articles authored or co-authored by Institute researchers.*
- *Family Matters*, no. 67, Autumn 2004 (64 pages) drew heavily on Institute research to feature articles on post-separation parenting – a timely topic given the recently completed Parliamentary Inquiry into Child Custody Arrangements in the Event of Family Separation. Included were articles on: the attitudes of separated parents to 50/50 shared care; father-child contact after separation; children's living arrangements after parental separation; legislating for shared parenting; and child support policy in Australia. *The edition included six major research articles authored or co-authored by Institute researchers.*

Over recent years, the page extent of *Family Matters* has been creeping up, particularly because of the increase in the number of high quality external contributions received. This was causing production and mailing costs to escalate, and a decision was made this year to reduce the number of pages of each edition without impoverishing the contents of the journal. This has been achieved by minor space saving adjustments to the layout, and by omitting or pruning some of the regular columns (for example, the bibliography section and the conference listings pages) that had increasingly become duplicated on the Institute's website. This has enabled the research articles to take more prominence, which the Publications Committee regards as a positive outcome.

Family Matters feedback, subscriptions, and media interest

The general response to *Family Matters* – written and spoken, formal and informal – continues to be extremely positive, as does the more specific responses gathered during consultation on the Communication and Information Program Review. This encourages the view that the journal will continue to be the main “voice” of the Institute.

A subscription rate applies to *Family Matters* but, in accordance with the Institute's aim of reaching a wide and diverse audience, it is also distributed to an extensive free list comprising Members of Parliament, key policy makers, and the media. While marketing activities were limited due to staffing changes and other priorities, paid *Family Matters* subscriptions rose to 2,250 during the year, with total distribution of over 4,000 copies per edition.

Family Matters always draws media attention with follow-up radio and press interviews and articles, and this year's three editions of *Family Matters* were no exception.

Family Matters online

Family Matters continues to be available as an online subscription. All articles can be accessed in HTML and PDF from RMIT Publishing's Informit e-Library, a specialist academic electronic publisher.

Series publications

In addition to *Family Matters* and the *Annual Report*, the Institute produces two series publications.

- *The Research Paper series* is an important means by which Institute research findings and methodologies are made public. The series enables the dissemination of Institute research (often during the course of a project) to policy makers, practitioners and researchers with the aim of encouraging dialogue with research and policy communities and thus obtaining review and feedback about the nature, direction and quality of Institute research.

In 2003-2004, two new Research Papers were published. Both are listed under Research Program C: Family and Society, in Chapter 3 of this Annual Report.

- *The Research Report series* comprises more substantial, finished works that report on research findings at major milestones in a research project, or at the completion of a project.

In 2003-2004, one new Research Report was published. This 156-page book is listed under Research Program B: Family and Marriage, in Chapter 3 of this Annual Report.

Contract publications and reports

The Institute publishes Issues Papers, Discussion Papers, Bulletins and Newsletters that emanate from the various contract research projects located at the Australian Institute of Family Studies. These are reported elsewhere in this Annual Report under the projects: the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children; the National Child Protection Clearinghouse; the Stronger Families Learning Exchange; and the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault.

During the year the Institute produced several commissioned reports which are also listed in Chapter 3 under the relevant research projects.

Media liaison

The principal means by which the general public becomes aware of the Institute's work is through the media. With family issues high on the policy agenda, the Institute continued its cooperative relationship with the media in 2003-2004. Staff received more than 600 requests for assistance from journalists. Information was provided in the form of Institute research, data held in the Institute library, or referral to other organisations.

Media Monitors reported a total of 290 media reports for the year – 81 print, 185 radio, and 24 television. By far the most pleasing aspect of the media coverage received during the year was the extent of regional and geographical coverage on the Institute's work. Syndication of radio and television reports to regional broadcasters brought the total number of broadcasts to 986 on radio and 184 on television. There was a total of 1,251 reports for the year, up from 494 in 2002-2003. Coverage extended to every state and territory.

The focus on family policy in the media made for an interesting year dealing with media. In particular, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs Inquiry into Child Custody Arrangements in the Event of Family Separation provided the Institute with an interesting media relations exercise. The announcement of the Inquiry resulted in a flood of media enquiries, all keen to have Institute views on the politics of the Inquiry, men's groups, the best interest of children, and the efficiency or otherwise of the Family Court. At various times during the Committee's deliberations, the Institute was approached to comment on the content of written or verbal submissions to the Inquiry. Immediately after the release of the Committee's report, further requests were received for comment.

The strategy adopted in relation to the Inquiry was to direct to relevant research, including Institute research, but not to engage in the debate. While happy to provide background information and speak about what research was revealing about post-separation parenting, the Institute did not comment specifically on the Committee's terms of reference, or recommendations.

Some journalists expressed disappointment by this stance, as they expected the Institute to have a "position" or to play an "active" public role in the debate. Similar tensions arose between the Institute and some media in respect of the 2004 Budget initiatives and Opposition policy announcements.

The Institute is pleased with the way in which its research contributed to the community's understanding of the issues being debated. In particular, the Institute paper on parent-child contact after separation, presented at the Social Policy Research Centre conference in July 2003, was frequently referred to in the early stages of the Inquiry into child custody. In early February 2004 the Institute started receiving requests to provide assistance to Channel 9's *Sunday* program, and SBS *Insight*, both of which were planning panel discussions around the anticipated release of the Government's response to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Child Custody Arrangements in the Event of Family Separation. Institute researchers provided background briefings for producers, reporters and hosts for both programs, and one researcher appeared on both panels.

Other media reporting highlights

The launch by the Minister of Family and Community Services of the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children, in February 2004, received extensive coverage – particularly on television where the event made the Sunday evening news bulletins on Channels 9, 7, 2 and SBS in all capitals, and on relay to regional services as well.

The launch of the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault (ACSSA) in September 2003, was reported on national television news bulletins, and also attracted print and radio interest. In the wake of the football sex scandals, the ACSSA Manager was quoted in several newspaper articles, and undertook a number of radio interviews in Melbourne and interstate. ACSSA's Briefing Paper No. 3 in November 2003, on "drink spiking", was also particularly widely reported.

Institute researchers were surprised by the reaction to the release of Working Paper No. 34, produced by research Program C (Family and Society), entitled “Measuring the Value of Unpaid Household, Caring and Voluntary Work of Older Australians”. After a disappointing print response, with only the *Herald Sun* and the *Adelaide Advertiser* running with it, the radio response to the media release was extraordinary. Forty-eight separate reports, in some cases syndicated to 44 stations, resulted in 344 broadcasts for the day and Australia-wide coverage for this paper.

Researchers presented a number of papers at the Social Policy Research Centre Conference in July 2003, with the paper by the head of research Program B (Family and Marriage), on long work hours and men’s satisfaction with them, opening up talk-back lines across the country. And Program B’s *Family Matters* article on children being left at home without adult supervision during the school holidays attracted 16 interviews for 28 reports in September 2003.

The Spring-Summer (2003-2004) edition of *Family Matters*, with its theme of “ageing”, generated a modest amount of generally high quality coverage. Since the edition’s release, the Institute has been receiving more general media enquiries around ageing issues, and it can be concluded that the edition successfully identified the Institute as an agency with an interest in and something to say about ageing issues for Australian families.

Library

The Institute’s Library, or Family Information Centre, is dedicated to providing a nationally and, where possible, internationally accessible repository of Australian and overseas family research and information.

The Library contributes directly to the Institute’s research outcomes through the provision of information. It also contributes to the Institute’s strategic work by hosting and participating in Clearinghouse and Communication projects. Last year, the Library continued to participate in the National Child Protection Clearinghouse project, the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children, the Stronger Families Learning Exchange, and the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault.

Library collection

Publishing trends reveal rapid growth of electronic materials as well as the continuing significance of traditional print formats. The Library acquired materials in both formats throughout the year, but the electronic format is now preferred where available.

The Library’s collection of electronic journals was significantly enhanced by the acquisition of several services providing full text electronic journals. Acquisition of further such services will continue to be a priority in the forthcoming year.

To build a strong collection that reflects the current and emerging research needs of the Institute, the Library’s collection development policy, updated in line with new research projects undertaken, was followed for acquisition of new materials, and the collection grew by an average of 200-250 items per month. Institute staff were alerted on a weekly basis to new items in their areas of interest.

To meet the needs of users for speedy and streamlined access to the repository, the Library’s catalogue was enhanced by the addition of tables of contents, abstracts and extra thesaurus headings. Worldwide access to the catalogue is enabled by its

location on the Institute's website, and during this year, the catalogue received an average of nearly 7,000 hits per month.

Collection holdings are added to the National Bibliographic Database, the fundamental tool underpinning resource sharing among Australian libraries. This promotes the collection and makes it accessible to more than 800 other networked Australian libraries and their patrons.

To cater for two main groups of clients, two versions of the library catalogue are provided. The general access catalogue currently contains 28,593 records. An enriched version, restricted to Institute staff and Clearinghouse clients (for copyright, license or commercial reasons) contains these plus an additional 16,994 records. Enrichments consist of journal articles, book chapters and conference papers. This catalogue version also acts as a gateway to full text electronic journals and statistical resources.

A major requirement identified by a 2001 staff user survey was a single searching interface to all resources and databases, and during the year the Library has continued to work towards providing this interface. The first stage entailed combination of internally produced databases into one database – the online catalogue. The second stage involved acquisition of a global interface to both internal and external databases. The Library has purchased an open url compliant search engine, Sirsi *Single Search*, for this purpose. The product will provide a single platform from which to search across all z39.50 compliant resources to which the Library has access.

Library services

The Family Information Centre aims to support the Institute's research activities through the delivery of high-quality, user-focused services.

During the reporting period, the Library continued to provide loans, inter-library loans and document delivery services founded on partnerships and inter-library cooperation, but commercial document delivery services were increasingly used. Electronic document delivery is the preferred method for journal article traffic to and from the Library, and *Ariel* software was installed for this purpose.

In order to provide an informed response to user queries, reference services, which may be accessed via telephone, mail, email or in person, continued to be provided to staff and stakeholders. Librarians responded to queries by drawing on the collection and databases, and referred requests for more specialised information to relevant research staff.

With the introduction of many new services, it has been necessary to train staff in their use. An induction session for each new staff member and regular segments at monthly Research Staff meetings are supplemented when required by one-on-one demonstrations of new services.

Publications

Adams, J. (ed.) (2003), *Stronger Families Learning Exchange Bulletin*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, no. 3, Winter.

Adams, J. (2003), "The Family Information Centre and Clearinghouses", *Vic Specials*, vol. 20, no. 4, December.

Jean, C. (2003), "Book notes", *Family Matters*, no. 65, Winter, pp. 76-77.

Jean, C. (2004), "Book notes", *Family Matters*, no. 66, Spring/Summer, pp. 68-69.

Jean, C. (2004), "Book notes", *Family Matters*, no. 66, Autumn, pp. 60-61.

Presentations

“An introduction to the Family Information Centre”, Presentation to ALIA Health Librarians Interest Group, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, 21 April 2004 (C. Jean).

“The SFLEX Clearinghouse”, Presentation at the Stronger Families Learning Exchange’s Regional Workshop for Stronger Families Fund Projects, Melbourne, 27 May 2004 (J. Adams and J. Kelleher).

“An introduction to the Family Information Centre”, Presentation to Monash University Librarianship Students, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, 3 October 2003 (C. Jean).

“The Family Information Centre at the Australian Institute of Family Studies”, Presentation to the Australian Library and Information Association (Vic), Melbourne, 30 September 2003 (J. Adams).

Online information

Australian Family & Society Abstracts

The *Australian Family & Society Abstracts* database was established by the Institute in 1983 with the aim of providing Australia-wide and international access to information and research on Australian family issues. The database records citations and abstracts to the research, policy and practice literature about Australian families and the social issues that impact on them.

Australian Family & Society Abstracts is now an established information service in the social sciences and one of a number of national bibliographic databases providing access to Australia’s research literature. Public access is provided via two database hosting services (one Australian and one in the United States) both offering Internet and CD-ROM services. The database continued to be well used in the tertiary education and government sectors, and by non-government organisations and professionals.

During 2003-2004 more than 3,500 new documents were added to the database bringing the total number of indexed documents to 55,800. Of the documents indexed this year 33 per cent linked directly to the full text report or article on the Web.

In response to stakeholder demand and in partnership with the academic electronic publisher RMIT Publishing, a new full text database was developed during the reporting period. *Family & Society Plus* is an enhanced version of *Australian Family & Society Abstracts*. In addition to the citations and abstracts and links to freely available documents on the Web, *Family & Society Plus* offers a collection of full text journal articles – available in PDF and HTML formats, supplied under licence from journal publishers.

Internet developments

The Institute’s Internet team is responsible for a range of Internet-related projects including the design and development of websites, the Institute’s Intranet, and a number of email alerting and discussion lists.

Web use statistics for all sites have continued to increase, with 58 per cent more pages downloaded compared with last financial year (Table 4.1).

Table 5.1 Statistics of web use

	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004
Successful requests (hits)	851,724	1,364,903	2,273,569	4,495,267	6,812,247
Pages downloaded	582,657	951,572	1,363,555	1,650,658	2,601,564

During the year the Institute's websites were redesigned according to the new Australian Government branding regulations and following the style adopted for Institute print publications. All new pages developed since July 2003 have been changed, as have any pages that are continually updated.

The Institute's main website reported on Institute programs and activities, disseminated information from its databases, publications and resource collections, and promoted the development of networks with other individuals and organisations concerned with family research and policy. New content during the year included: two titles in the *Family Facts and Figures* series on cohabitation and child care; bibliographies on work and family and caring for children after parental separation; research papers and conference papers by Institute researchers; and further development of web pages on trends and statistics and courses and training for families, and for professionals who work with families.

Work also progressed on the five other websites maintained by the Institute – three sites for clearinghouse and communication projects (namely, the National Child Protection Clearinghouse, the Stronger Families Learning Exchange, and the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault), and two sites for research projects (namely, the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children, and the Australian Temperament Project). Web activity is reported under each of these projects in Chapter 3 of this report.

Intranet

Following a review during the year, changes were made to the structure and content of the Institute's Intranet to improve access and coverage. An A-Z index with multiple entry points now gives easy access to all aspects of the Institute's business and to key pages on the Institute's external website and project sites. News and activities for each week are highlighted on the Intranet home page.

Alerting service

The Institute's email alerting service keeps stakeholders up to date with the work and activities of the Institute. At the end of the financial year more than 1,000 people were receiving the weekly *aifs-alert* email. An analysis of email addresses showed 95 per cent were Australian and 5 per cent from other countries. Australian subscribers came from the following sectors: Government – 32 per cent (40 per cent federal; 50 per cent state; 10 per cent local); Education – 18 per cent; Business – 32 per cent; Non-government organisations – 7 per cent; Media and .net domain – 6 per cent.

Representation at workshops, conferences and external committees

Member, House Committee, Childwatch International Children's House in Cyberspace (D. Whithear).

Member, Informit Online/AUSTROM, Database Producers Committee (D. Whithear).

Institute seminars

In 2003-2004, the Institute continued its series of seminars presenting contemporary issues in national and international family research. The seminars are designed to promote a forum for discussion and debate, and are free and open to the public.

Particularly welcome are overseas visiting researchers, who are able to provide international perspectives, and researchers from other organisations, who can add to the depth of knowledge about family-related research in Australia.

Again this year, a range of topics was covered, with the majority being presented by researchers from outside the Institute. The seminars were attended by audiences from different backgrounds, attracting between 30 and 50 participants each time, and providing opportunities to share research and discuss ideas. Where papers have been provided by the seminar presenters, these have been placed on the Institute's website and actively promoted.

Institute seminar program 2003–2004

This year 11 seminars were hosted by the Institute.

17 JULY 2003

An ethnographic exploration of the development of child rearing styles among the Ngaanyatjarra people from the pre-contact era to the present day

Gillian Shaw

School of Public Health and Community Medicine

University of New South Wales

Facilitator – Richard Munt, Australian Institute of Family Studies

21 AUGUST 2003

Cohabitation and mental health: Is there a link?

Dr David de Vaus

Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, La Trobe University and Senior Research Advisor, Australian Institute of Family Studies

Facilitator – Ruth Weston, Australian Institute of Family Studies

18 SEPTEMBER 2003

Living in low income households in Scotland: Experiences of caring and providing

Dr Kathryn Backett-Milburn

Co-Director, Centre for Research on Families and Relationships, University of Edinburgh

Facilitator – David de Vaus, Australian Institute of Family Studies

16 OCTOBER 2003

Grandparenting in divorced families: A qualitative research study

Dr Neil Ferguson

Research Associate, Cardiff Law School

Cardiff University, Wales

Facilitator – Bruce Smyth, Australian Institute of Family Studies

6 NOVEMBER 2003

Does age-of-entry matter in infants' transition to child care?

Dr C. Dissanayake and Dr H. Skouteris

School of Psychological Science, La Trobe University

Facilitator – Lisa da Silva, Australian Institute of Family Studies

4 DECEMBER 2003

How do we know who children live with and why does it matter? Findings from the United States and Australia

Dr Peter Brandon

Department of Sociology

University of Massachusetts, USA

Facilitator – Matthew Gray, Australian Institute of Family Studies

12 FEBRUARY 2004

The Kuninjku hybrid economy: Continuity and change in family relations of production in Arnhem Land, North Australia

Professor John Altman

Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University

Facilitator – Matthew Gray, Australian Institute of Family Studies

Continued ►

18 MARCH 2004

Changing landscapes of family life

Professor Carol Smart

Centre for Research on Family, Kinship and Childhood, Department of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds, UK

Facilitator – Ann Sanson, Australian Institute of Family Studies

15 APRIL 2004

The Columbus Pilot in the Family Court of Western Australia: A study in reflective practice

Dr Paul Murphy and Associate Professor Lis Pike

School of Psychology, Edith Cowan University

Facilitator – Ruth Weston, Australian Institute of Family Studies

20 MAY 2004

Family relationships and mental health

Dr Bryan Rodgers

Centre for Mental Health Research, Australian National University

Facilitator – Bruce Smyth, Australian Institute of Family Studies

17 JUNE 2004

Nobody's clients: Children with drug or alcohol dependent parents

Dr Stefan Gruenert

Senior Policy Officer, Odyssey House Australia

Facilitator – Diana Smart, Australian Institute of Family Studies