

Letters

Technological change in libraries: submission

I WOULD like to comment on the contents of the document submitted on behalf of the LAA to the RMIT Department of Communications, on the effect of technological change on libraries and librarians in Australia.

My major concern is the view of librarians in the future as information intermediaries mainly to socially disadvantaged groups. This discounts the wide range of potential business users, who, for various reasons, will always prefer to pay for a fast efficient service rather than spend their own time searching for information.

Such users have been ill-served by libraries in the past and have resorted to various alternate methods, mostly expensive and with only limited access.

Librarians who see themselves as mainly social workers (and obviously these will always be needed) expose the whole profession to the vagaries of government policy and limited funding, and will end up serving no group satisfactorily.

The comments on higher levels of productivity by librarians (as a direct result of automation) were given insufficient weight – surely this is the whole crux of the argument relating to the effects of technological change on (un)employment.

I would also disagree with the statement regarding the employment situation for librarians. My information (from the Department of Immigration) is that there is an oversupply in all states (not a balanced or slightly oversupplied market). Reference to staff ceilings in the government sector and saturation in the education sector merely serve to illustrate the point made earlier of an over-dependence on government funding for employment prospects.

In the context of future technological developments, I should also like to refer to the Prestel demonstration recently seen in Australia. This seems to be a perfect illustration of the use of high technology systems for the transfer of what can only be called, for the most part, trivia.

Vanessa Bourne

George Patterson Pty Ltd, Melbourne

Miklouho-Maclay Society

MAY I bring to the notice of readers the fact that the above-named Society is alive and well and anxious to have the support of Australian librarians in pursuit of its aims.

The Society was founded as a direct result of a ceremony in the State Library of New South Wales in 1978 in celebration of the centenary of the arrival in Sydney of N.N. de Miklouho-Maclay, pioneer New Guinea naturalist, explorer and humanitarian.

One of the Society's aims is to encourage Australian libraries to acquire and make available for public consultation material relating to the travels and work of N.N. Miklouho-Maclay.

May I make a special plea on behalf of the society to Australian librarians to support

this aim on the grounds, first, that Maclay's work both in New Guinea and in Australia was of significance for the development of Australian science; second, that in his relationships with the then primitive people with whom he worked Maclay set the kind of standards which should govern that kind of relationship and, third, that this endeavour effectively bridges the gap between two worlds in that the USSR is keenly interested in preserving the memory of this distinguished emigrant from its shores.

Further information relating to the Society and its work, as also to the figure it honours, can be obtained by writing to the President, Mr R.W. Maclay, 208 Old South Head Road, Vaucluse, 2030.

Harrison Bryan, University of Sydney

Holocaust: propaganda

DR W.D. RUBINSTEIN, an American academic, temporarily in Australia working on a book with the theme that 'Jews have become a new social economic and political elite in the West' wrote (*AustLibJ*, no 11, 6 July) that librarians should not catalogue *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century* by Professor Arthur Butz.

He says that he would like to bring a 'most disturbing and unpleasant matter' to the attention of librarians, namely, that some libraries have received free copies of the Butz book, and compares the book to openly racist and anti-semitic propaganda. He says librarians should treat the book as though it were donated by the Ku Klux Klan.

In fact, I donated the Butz book. I am not a member of the KKK, but have been Secretary of the Victorian Council for Civil Liberties since 1966 and have been actively opposed to censorship for several decades.

Mr Rubinstein's concern about a book challenging the Holocaust is understandable for he has stated that 'were the Holocaust to be shown to be a hoax, the number one weapon in Israel's propaganda armoury disappears'. Perhaps librarians should allow readers to decide whether Israel's number one propaganda weapon disappears.

I would like to bring some more 'disturbing and unpleasant news' to Dr Rubinstein's attention, and good news for librarians. I am the Australian representative of the Institute for Historical Review and will shortly be circularising all libraries with a list of publications available from the Institute.

The books which the Institute will make available are effectively banned by trade boycott here. John Bennett, Carlton, Vic

I HAVE monitored, with some interest, the correspondence regarding the 'Holocaust' in your publication. I had the pleasure of meeting John Bennett at our 1979 Revisionist Convention in Los Angeles, and was very highly impressed with his integrity, courage, and intelligence.

It would seem that at long last the 'exterminationist' lobby are having to trim their sails. In the British *New Statesman* of 2 November 1979, Ms Gitta Sereny admits that 'Auschwitz, despite its emblematic name, was *not* primarily an extermination camp for Jews, and is not the central case through which to study extermination policy'.

This would seem to be the next logical step in the exterminationists' retreat, for just after the war they claimed that *all* the camps were for gassing Jews. Then in 1960, they admitted that the camps in Germany proper did not have gas chambers – only the camps in Poland did.

Now they are saying that Auschwitz was

not the main extermination centre: Chelmo, Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka were. However, no one can forensically check this claim. There is no physical trace that these camps ever existed as the sites are just plain fields.

Later in the same article, Ms Sereny states that the orchestra at Auschwitz played 'when slave-laborers marched to and from work' (not to the gas-chambers).

Ms Sereny goes on to admit that many 'survivor testimonies' are fakes. She says that she herself was approached to help Martin Gray write *For Those I Loved*, about his escape from Treblinka, which place 'he had manifestly never been to'. She likewise pans Steiner's *Treblinka* as being 'pure fiction; incredibly remaining, nonetheless, in serious biographies'.

It is this habit of fictional novels turning up in 'historical' reference works (Ms Sereny gives the example herself of Martin Gilbert's *Final Journey*) which the Institute for Historical Review has set out to correct. History books should be about the facts, not about fantasy.

I would recommend Ms Sereny's article to any readers interested in bringing history into accord with the facts.

Lewis Brandon
Director, Institute for Historical Review
California, USA

Libraries of Sydney

NEIL RADFORD'S review of *Libraries of Sydney* expressed the hope that a revised edition would be produced.

I hasten to reiterate the statement in the introduction to the directory viz.

'No further edition of *Libraries of Sydney* is intended ... a Sydney-based organisation may wish to undertake a revision in due course. Permission for such a revision will be readily granted, and all assistance given.'

It does seem preferable that directories of the libraries of all the large Australian cities should be undertaken by local libraries, or possibly library schools as a co-operative student project.

With the exception of the *Directory of ACT Libraries* and *Libraries of Melbourne*, despite the assured market for such publications, this unfortunately has not occurred.

Alan L. Bundy
Footscray Institute of Technology

Dewey error

I SHOULD like to bring to the attention of cataloguers an error in the 19th edition of Dewey, the nature of which is revealed in the telexes quoted below, the first sent to Benjamin Custer, editor of Dewey, and the second his reply:

'Apparent conflict in 19th edition Dewey re classification for Singapore. Table 2 areas gives new number for Singapore-5957. Instruction for 930-990 reads "add areas notation from Table 2 to base number 9" but Singapore history number is given as 959.52. Please explain.'

'History number for Singapore is 959.57, with period subdivisions adjusted accordingly. Will correct in next issue of DC and thank you for bringing this unfortunate error to our attention.'

Apparently *Singapore national bibliography* has always used 959.57, as the Singapore National Library feels Singapore should not be placed between Malaya and Sabah.

Glenis Sellwood
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