

'EXCESS OF SUCCESS'

OPEN WEEK AT STATE LIBRARY

The State Library of New South Wales threw open its doors during January to some of its normally restricted areas. During the five weekdays and two weekends of 'Open Week' visitors were taken on 'behind-the-scenes' tours to see how the Library operates.

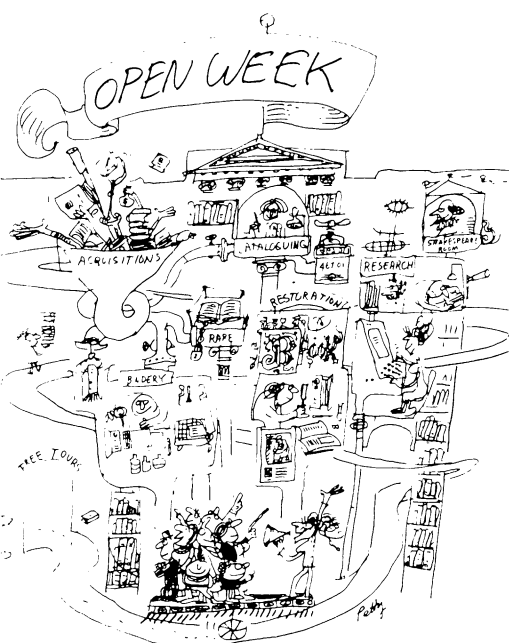
Originally, there were 96 tours (limited to 12 people) planned, but owing to an 'excess of success' an extra 14 tours were put on to cope with the demand and these were booked out within the hour of their announcement.

In the words of Christine Tabuteau, the State Library's Publicity Officer, 'We were thrilled with the response from the public - we hadn't quite anticipated our popularity! In fact, the whole of the staff of the State Library, most of whom were involved as either guides, speakers or in the preparation of displays, seemed to enjoy the experience too.'

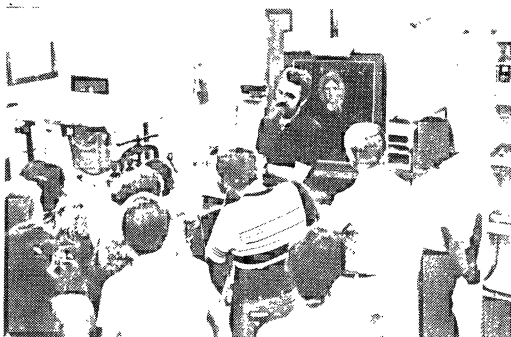
'Needless to say, it was great publicity for us - we received lots of free radio and press publicity - and we plan to hold even bigger and better "Open Weeks" in the future'.

The tours, which were an event for the Festival of Sydney, took visitors through the newspaper and microform rooms; the Mitchell Library's picture collection; the Rare Books collection; restoration workshop; the bindery and the underground 'stacks'.

At the end of each tour visitors were supplied with a *Libraries are Great Mate* 'sample bag' (produced by the Australian Library Promotion Council) filled with various pamphlets on State Library services and resources; a pamphlet on the architecture and history of the State Library building; pamphlets on the location of public libraries in the Sydney and NSW country and a *Libraries are Great Mate* balloon.



'Open Week' poster
designed by Bruce Petty



Top: The Government Printing Office participated in the 'Week'. Here, a member of their bindery staff demonstrates gold lettering. Center: Tom Nielsen in the conservation workshop explaining restoration work. The picture in the background was restored by him. Above: Christine Pryke gives information to visitors about the Mitchell Library's display of items which included glass negatives, etchings, paintings, etc.

Search of borrowers' records challenged

Who should have access to public library circulation records?

The answer to this question is being hotly disputed at the moment between librarians and government agents in Iowa, US.

The disputes began last year after the state attorney-general ruled that circulation records in public libraries should be open for examination.

The December 1979 issue of *Privacy Journal* - an independent monthly on privacy in a computer age - (Washington, DC) reports:

'Ever since the state attorney general ruled this year that the circulation records in public libraries are open under the state's open records law, book borrowers in Iowa have not been sure just who has been seeing the lists of books they have been reading.'

'The American Library Association policy says that individual borrower records should remain secret unless government agents have a legal order or subpoena as well as "good cause."

'The Iowa Citizens Privacy Task Force, now completing its report to the governor, will probably recommend a change in the law to protect borrowers' records because of two recent incidents.'

'In Muscatine County, in the eastern part of the state, the sheriff, investigating a murder, sought a list of the books checked out by an individual. The library director refused, but was overruled by her board. That policy is now being challenged in court.'

'In Des Moines, the Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation is investigating several cattle mutilations, believed to be the work of a religious cult. The DCI sought records from the public library to see who had checked out books on occult practices. The library insisted on a subpoena, then refused to honor the subpoena. That dispute is now in court.'

SHOCKS TO THE LEGAL SYSTEM

The Australian legal system is in for a few shocks in the 1980s but Law Reformers are optimistic.

According to Law Reform Commission Chairman, Mr Justice Kirby, some areas of substantive law 'requiring scrutiny' include accident compensation, industrial democracy and the multiple impact of new information technology such as computers on the law of evidence, copyright, patent law, crime.

According to the Commission's bulletin *Reform*, the impact of technological change and the rapidly changing values of Australian society require urgent attention to improve Australia's legal system.

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