

CABLE TELEVISION — SUBMISSION

THE AUSTRALIAN Advisory Council on Bibliographical Services (AACOBS) and the Library Association of Australia have sent a submission, 'Cable and Subscription Television Services and Related Matters' to the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal's inquiry into cable TV.

The submission, prepared by Denis Richardson (Librarian, University of Melbourne, President of the LAA and Convener of AACOBS Working Party on Systems and Communications), is published here, in part, for your interest.

Both the Australian Advisory Council on Bibliographical Services and the Library Association of Australia are concerned with the organisation of resources which provide the basis for library and information services either to the public at large in defined geographical areas, or to specific client groups located in particular institutions, businesses, government departments etc. Information is now recognised as a significant commodity in contemporary society and futurologists refer to the emergence of an information-based society by the end of the present century. Individual libraries no longer see themselves as self-sufficient institutions. In the last decade Australian libraries have reflected a

growing concern to establish network relationships with other libraries and to share resources to the benefit of users.

The enormous growth in recorded information in recent decades has led to an increasing recognition of the need to exploit the capabilities of computing and microform technologies to enable libraries and information services to process documents and make their contents available as required. At the same time we have seen the development of communication systems capable of transferring very large volumes of data both between libraries and from library to user.

Although the present Inquiry is being conducted under the provisions of the Broadcasting and Television Act, 1942, we have noted that the terms of reference include: 'the range and diversity of services . . . of an entertainment *information, education or other kind* that could be provided by means of, or in association with cable television'.

We wish to submit that the fullest consideration should be given to the potential of cable TV as an element in a national communications (ie interactive) system, and not merely within the context of broadcasting (ie distributive) system. We wish to draw attention to the potential of cable TV as a facility which would be used by libraries and information services:

- 1 As a two way interactive communication system linking library information services and the user;
- 2 as a document delivery communication channel linking facsimile transmission systems to the users receiver;
- 3 to serve through library programmes general community needs for library and information services such as: children's story hours, community information services;
- 4 to serve clients with special needs with programmes tailored to such needs. Such special needs could include areas such as: handicapped users, literacy programmes, programmes for ethnic communities; and
- 5 as an element in a national network of communication systems linking libraries and utilising various technologies and increasing video technology.

It is not possible at this stage to identify the speed and scale of use of such services by library and information services if they were available. To build the necessary resources and develop appropriate skills would require

financial resources which it would be difficult for most library and information services to re-allocate in the current economic climate. Nevertheless we should not ignore the developments which are, albeit slowly, taking place overseas. These would indicate that in the future libraries will exploit the capabilities of cable TV if they have the opportunity and the cable TV services are so structured to enable their utilisation by libraries and information services.

We therefore submit that if cable TV services are established under government aegis adequate consideration must be given to the future potential of such a facility as an element in a national communications and broadcasting system. In particular we wish to draw attention to the likely future needs of Australian library and information services to use such a facility:

- 1 for distribution of programmes and information directed to specific client needs; and
- 2 for the development of interactive information services.

If alternatively cable TV services are to be provided under license, by private sector interests and particularly if such licence gives a particular company a monopoly or quasi-monopoly in the provision of services in a particular geographical area, or to a particular client group, then we submit, the licence holder should be required to provide up to 20 percent of the capacity of the particular cable TV installation for use by public institutions for broadly educational purposes including library and information services. At least 10 percent of such reserved capacity should be in prime time.

We submit that before such services are introduced any proposals should be the subject of widespread public debate, and in particular the implications any proposals may have concerning:

- 1 the relationship between any licence holder and other publishing, communication or information type services;
- 2 the financial basis under which public institutions would have access to cable TV for both broadcasting and interactive information type services;
- 3 the nature of the controls on any company or public agency providing such services; and
- 4 the relationship of such services to other publicly or privately owned communication and/or broadcasting or publishing services.

LAA/NZLA

ENROLMENTS for the LAA/NZLA combined conference have now passed 800, and conference organisers expect this figure to exceed 900 by the time final enrolments have closed on 30 November.

The conference will therefore be about the same size as the Hobart conference in 1977, although from the New Zealand point of view, it is twice as large as their largest conferences.

One of the current 'hot topics' in the Australian press, freedom of information, will be canvassed in a number of conference papers. Labor MP Barry Jones will talk about the role information will play in a post-industrial society and the need to guarantee access to information. Kevin Clements, a senior lecturer in sociology at the University of Canterbury, will discuss FOI and public interest movements in New Zealand.

The ABC's former Washington correspondent, Peter Barnett, now Head of Radio Australia, will speak about the influence of Radio Australia in the Pacific region as well as recounting some of his Washington stories.

LAA members attending the conference will welcome the opportunity to meet with their NZ counterparts at the NZLA section AGMs which are being held on Wednesday. All LAA members are invited to attend these sessions.

In all other areas, planning is now nearing completion. The trade exhibition, which will be all under the same roof as the conference sessions at the Town Hall venue, is expected to be fully booked. There will be a combined LAA/NZLA stand at the exhibition, where conference delegates will be able to place orders for publications of the two Associations, as well as the *Proceedings* of the Conference.

A final reminder to all conference goers — ensure that travel and accommodation requirements have been confirmed. It will be difficult to find any spare accommodation in Christchurch in January!

BAUOY BITS... COLUMN OF ONLINE NEWS

TO ALL THOSE people who have requested a loan of the Data Courier tape/slide set — demand for this has been heavy, and so apologies to those people who are still waiting.

If you want it for a specific purpose on a specific date, please let me know and I will try to accommodate. If you just want to look at it for general interest, then please be patient and your turn will come.

Plans are well under way for the Online Dinner to be held on Monday 19 January 1981 at the NZLA/LAA Conference in Christchurch.

It is to be held at The Greenhouse, and in the words of a Christchurch resident, this is one of the pleasantest, most original and most dependable of Christchurch's restaurants. The cuisine will be from Normandy (quiches and Calvados), and the restaurant will opening especially for us — it is not usually open on

a Monday night. Cost will be in the vicinity of \$14-\$15 per head, without wine.

Places are strictly limited, and are filling up rapidly. Don't miss out — ring Katie Blake today and put your name down. Telephone (02) 264 6344.

I would like to take this opportunity of wishing everyone the compliments of the season, and to express my thanks to all those who have contributed to or enjoyed this column.

It has been a very exciting year for onlining, with many new developments and changes. I am sure that 1981 will be no less interesting, and that we can look forward to improvements in databases, systems, and telecommunications.

Contributions to this column should be sent to Katie Blake, PO Box J36, Brickfield Hill, NSW 2000, (02) 26 6344.