

# Letters

## Victimised for criticism?

THE *Liverpool Leader* (NSW) of 9 January 1980, published a letter from two librarians at the Liverpool City Council Library, Peter McGregor and Tony Peachey.

The letter, under the heading 'New Policy Praised' read in part:

'As library staff at the Liverpool City Council Library, we wholeheartedly support the decision by library management and council to redistribute excess book stock amongst other public libraries in Sydney in accordance with the Sydney Subject Specialisation Scheme ...

'Previously, "weeded" material has neither been sold cheaply nor given away; either to the public, needy welfare institutions or to libraries/information centres.

'Rather, such community resources have been destroyed by library staff as an act of library policy ... We congratulate Liverpool City Council Library on its well-overdue policy change.'

*Incite* received a copy of that letter, but because of space limitations in the first issue of the newsletter, we were unable to publish it. Since then we have received the following letter from Peter McGregor:

Since the letter that I and Tony Peachey sent you, I have been sacked/dismissed.

Four reasons were given for my dismissal — my attendance, my attitude to work, matters dealt with in two Administrative Officer's memos to me about the former reasons, and my alleged 'complete lack of co-operation with the City Librarian'. In sacking me, the Administrative Officer said that my letter with Tony, (which had appeared in the *Liverpool Leader* of 9/1/1980), had not helped my position, and that Council employees were not supposed to talk to the press about Council matters (I had never been informed of this previously.)

Although the written reasons for my dismissal don't include mention of my (and Tony's) open criticism of Liverpool Library's policy of covertly destroying library resources, I believe this is another reason for my sacking.

As a result of disputes between myself and the City Librarian, from 14 December 1979 had been placed on a month's probation/trial as an agreement between the Administrative Officer and the Organiser from the Municipal Employees Union.

I understood the period of probation related solely to my attendance, and believe for the month's probation that my attendance was good — the only 'blemishes' being lateness on two mornings (one day when there was a train strike, and another day when there was a train delay for 40 minutes). On both occasions I was only 10-20 minutes late — on the first occasion hitching in to Liverpool from my home in Redfern.

Hence I believe that I have been sacked unfairly — because the condition of my probation was satisfactory attendance — and that I have been possibly victimised by the City Librarian because of my public criticism of his deplorable policy of destroying library books.

Peter McGregor, Redfern, NSW

## Complaints to be monitored

TWO areas of responsibility for the General Secretary in 1980 are services to members and organisational development.

One of the criticisms often made of the LAA is the lack of response to correspondence sent to Headquarters. In many cases in the past this criticism appears to have been justified but in numerous other instances lack of knowledge of procedures or misunderstandings have been the culprits.

In an effort to avoid these problems this year a 'complaints file' has been established and this will be monitored by the Executive Committee on a monthly basis. Where misunderstandings are recurring — eg the time required to approve Associateships and the disbursement process for funds to Divisions, these will be examined and the procedures changed where necessary and, more importantly, publicised.

As a measure of my commitment to the improvement of communications in all directions within the Association, I am prepared to follow up, personally, any outstanding grievances members may have in this area. Please contact me c/o Moonee Valley Regional Library Service, 762 Mt Alexander Road, Moonee Ponds, Vic 3039 or (03) 370 5244.

Headquarters is always looking for constructive ideas on improvements to services and its organisation. If you have some thoughts we should be glad to hear of them.

The psychology of librarianship means there are at least 7000 different opinions out there — let's hear some of them in 1980.

Euan M. Miller, LAA General Secretary

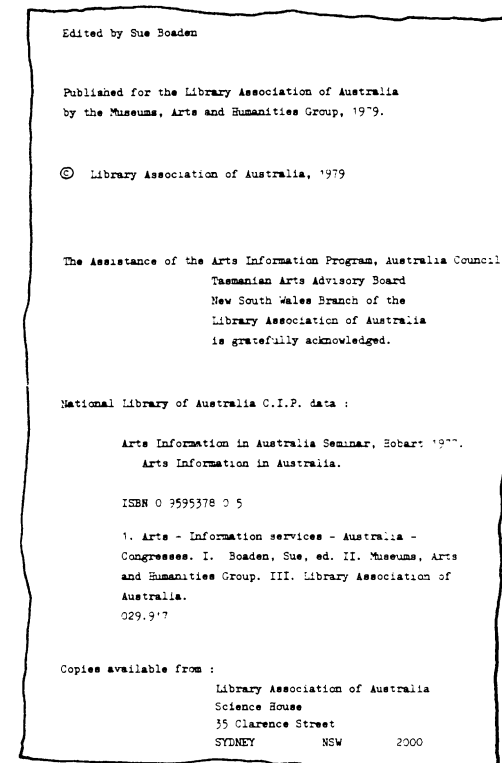
## Bibliographical monstrosity

I ASSUME that the Library Association of Australia's association with the publication of *Arts Information in Australia* was to provide an object lesson to publishers, and cataloguers on how not to produce a title page.

It must have required considerable imagination to cram together on one page such a confusing diversity of information.

Congratulations are due to whoever was responsible for this bibliographical monstrosity.

W.L. Brown, State Librarian, Tasmania



## Information systems only for elite

I WAS interested to read Ms Bourne's comments in the last issue of *Incite* regarding the LAA's submission to the RMIT regarding their report to the Committee of Inquiry into Technological Change.

The LAA submission was drafted by a hastily convened sub-committee consisting of Hans Groenewegen and nominees of the Victorian Branch of the LAA. It was apparent that consensus on the possible or desirable future impact of electronic technology of libraries was not likely to be achieved and that there was little factual data on which to base future forecasting.

The sub-committee, therefore attempted to draw a scenario of a possible technological future and to raise some of the social implications of such a future.

It was not intended to discount the information needs of business users and to favour the socially disadvantaged. Librarians have a tradition of taking into account the information needs of all categories of users and there are many potential business users who should be provided with appropriate services. Nevertheless, the long-term development of 'user-friendly' query languages, the availability of low-cost terminals in the home and office, and the growth of computer data services containing a wide variety of information sources currently in print form, may make it less necessary for business users to rely on an intermediary librarian for searching. Some will, of course, prefer to pay for the services of a searcher and librarians are still likely to be consulted for their knowledge of relevant information sources.

There is a danger that information systems of this type will create a computer elite and that certain disadvantaged groups will be further deprived of information access because of their lack of appropriate education, low earning ability or other factors. Librarians could then have to place a new emphasis on providing access to such groups and conduct searches on their behalf, if the spirit behind the public library service is to continue. This does not turn the public librarian into a social worker whose main concern is with social welfare information.

It is true that librarians are exposed to the vagaries of government funding, however that seems inevitable for those who serve the public sector. Nor are those in private industry entirely exempt from the effects of government policies.

The comments on short-term employment prospects in the submission were based on figures supplied by government to the LAA in 1976 and on the fact that there are government constraints in force at present. It is recognised that more accurate data is needed and the Victorian Branch is currently planning a manpower survey on behalf of the LAA. Any input to that study would be appreciated.

I agree with Ms Bourne's remark that Prestel seems to be 'a perfect illustration of the use of high technology systems for the transfer ... of trivia'.

Technology is now here for information to be packaged and sold as a consumer good to the mass market like any other commodity. Serious consideration of the content and use of such systems is only likely to occur if librarians and other professionals with a knowledge of the potential range of information needs and sources become more actively involved in demanding planning by government of such services.

Doreen Parker  
President, LAA Vic Branch