

# Letters

## Credibility gap

DURING the weekend of 14 and 15 March 1981, Community Activity Centres Network held a conference in Condobolin, the very centre of NSW. The conference was entitled 'The know how and the know who in the West: an information exchange'.

Personal invitations were extended to all librarians in the surrounding geographical area in the form of a special edition of the *Network News*, our regular resources newspaper.

Fifty delegates were enrolled and in addition people came from Condobolin on a daily basis. They represented a variety of community based groups including: adult education, child care, arts and crafts, schools, handicapped groups, after school activities and community information centres. Key resource people came from Broken Hill, Brewarrina, Wilcannia, Queensland and all the areas between Condobolin and Sydney. We even had a Fulbright Scholar from the USA who was our special International Year of Disabled Persons visitor.

The Broken Hill Outback Library Service was unable to come because they were not released by their Council for the extended weekend needed for travel. In fact not one librarian came! Not one library was represented!

I am concerned that our apparently unorthodox invitation failed to bring about our anticipated response of interest and enthusiasm from librarians who would welcome the opportunity to meet informally with a large cross-section of the community in which their libraries are based.

If librarians are alive 'out there' I am interested to learn why they chose to miss an exciting, thought provoking and information-packed weekend. I am particularly concerned librarians did not attend because the long-term effects of the conference will be significant and long-lasting in their community and the lack of library input is a reflection on the credibility gap between librarians and the community they supposedly serve!

*Dawn G. Springett*  
Arnccliffe, NSW

## Cheap labour

WHEN W. H. Ifould became Librarian of the Public Library of NSW he did employ women. (See *Incite* no3).

H.R. Purnell, then Principal Librarian of the Public Library of South Australia, visited Sydney in 1928 (after the foundation conference of the Australian Library Association) and reported W.H. Ifould's views:

'The staff of the Sydney Public Library, excepting the Chief Librarian, Mitchell Librarian, and two male Assistants . . . consists of women. Mr Ifould considers that salaries acceptable to women of graduate standing would be insufficient to retain men with an equal standard of educational attainments, and that he can therefore run the library more cheaply than with a male staff.'

*J. P. Whyte*  
Monash University

## Limited, by order

IN JANUARY this year I applied for a place in the LAA/ABPA/ABA Conference entitled 'Libraries and Local Ordering in the 80s'.

As I understand it, one of the co-operating organisations refused to have more than 40 members of the Library Association at the seminar, leaving the Victorian Branch of the LAA with the difficult decision of selecting places from among the applicants.

Whilst I am aware that the members of the selection panel exercised great restraint, I am most astonished to find that no specific allowance was provided for library educators. Naturally one would expect that those directly involved in acquisitions should have high priority to attend such a seminar, but so I believe, do those lecturing in this field. They are after all providing for future professional librarians who may be placed in charge of acquisitions. There are only four institutions in Victoria having staff in this category and it would have been possible to consult with those wishing to attend before excluding them.

It is a pity that the LAA has to agree to limited numbers for a seminar of such importance to the profession. I am also disappointed that the organisers did not indicate earlier in the year the criteria by which they intended to select applicants. Had they done so, it is possible that the library educators could have put their point of view in time to be considered.

It is to be hoped that the fullest possible report on proceedings will be available soon after the seminar.

*Thelma Rungkat*  
Ballarat CAE

THE International Booksellers Federation restricted numbers to 90 – 30 from each of the sponsoring organisations. A later concession enabled 40 librarians to attend.

The IBF requested that only senior practising acquisitions librarians attend as they saw it as a policy-making seminar. The selection panel abided by IBF's requests and with over 70 applicants, some other criteria had to be used as well.

Some of these included one person from each library and a preference for LAA members.

Proceedings will be available, specifically because of the restriction on numbers.

The selection criteria were discussed by the Vic Branch Council at its 11 February meeting but no Education for Librarianship Section representative was present.

Probably the Branch's biggest mistake was not to openly publicise the restriction of 30 librarians, however, Branch Councillors did know and the fact is included in the minutes which went to all Vic Sections and Regional Groups towards the end of February.

*Ray Price* University of Melbourne

## From start to finish

I READ *Incite* vol2, no4 with great interest. We all must try to make sure that projects and services for the handicapped which we have started, or intend to start, will be continued in the future. We all know that the handicapped people will not disappear or require less services when the International Year of Disabled Persons finishes officially.

Of course, IYDP is a wonderful opportunity for librarians who have been concerned with the service for the handicapped to bring to the attention of the Government and the public the problems, and to seek their understanding and funding. There is only so much librarians

can do to improve the service with understanding alone.

This year I had an opportunity to study some aspects of library services for the handicapped in the USA. As one particular case is relevant to our problem, I wish to share it with readers who may be interested.

A branch library of the San Francisco Public Library was selected during 1978 to be a specialised library to serve handicapped people. This project was funded mainly by the Federal Government. Residents in the Sacramento area actually protested strongly against the project as they feared the normal services for them and their children might suffer. After many public meetings and assurances, this branch has become the 'Communication Centre' for the disabled and 'Reading Centre' for other residents.

The Centre has a total of 10 full-time and five part-time staff. These include two part-time audio and video engineers, braillist (blind) and a deaf service specialist. The Centre's Librarian has been studying sign language for the last few years and now communicates with deaf people on most subjects.

The problem is that the Librarian does not know if enough funding is going to be available to maintain the services from one year to another. It was clear that this year, being the IYDP, the Government would not dare reduce or discontinue the funding. With the City Librarian facing a cut in annual budget of between nine to 15 percent, resulting the closing down this July of one of the busy down-town branch libraries, it seems the future of the Communication Centre depends largely on government grants.

Organisations such as the National Advisory Committee on Library Services for the Handicapped, the National Library of Australia and the Library Association of Australia should not miss this golden opportunity (IYDP) to improve the services for the handicapped. Meetings with the public and with politicians should be organised along with seminars and workshops.

If our efforts can make an impact on the Government and the Australian public, we shall see an improvement in the present and future services for the handicapped people.

*Taisoo Kim Watson* Brighton City Library

## Aust book prices

IN RECENT years Australian libraries have been buying UK published books direct from UK library suppliers. The favourable exchange rates experienced over this period was certainly one of the main reasons despite the inherent difficulties of dealing with a supplier 10,000 miles away.

Collins in Australia naturally have been aware of this 'problem' and have been working hard to price our popular British published books at the right price for the Australian market. Librarians who went to the UK to get the best possible price on their library shelf are now asked to make absolutely sure that they are spending their money wisely. With the current high price of sterling, freight charges and other hidden costs involved in importing books direct from the UK libraries must think carefully before ordering and in many cases will find they are saving money and time by ordering through an Australian supplier.

This is a radical new approach to the marketing of British books in Australia, sure to be followed by other publishers, which can only mean better service and more books per dollar for Australian libraries. *James Fraser*  
William Collins Pty Limited