

ABN — how it works

WE HAVE BEEN informed (*For information*, NLA, 309/81, 9 March 1981) that '... Several Canberra and interstate libraries are being given access to the National Library's on-line cataloguing system as part of the continuing investigation into the feasibility of establishing an Australian Bibliographic Network. Commencing in March 1981, six organisations will for a trial period of approximately six months have direct access through on-line terminals to the system'.

Some of us have been hoping now, for at least a decade, that something like this will happen during our lifetime. What is offered here is the facility to input cataloguing data on-line to a large data base with the possibility of such information becoming available all over Australia as soon as this procedure is completed and validated. This in itself could be tremendous, but we *can* go even further.

We can input information about titles *on-order* as well, so that in time the old complaint about being unaware of other libraries' intentions becomes invalid and rational decision-making becomes reality.

Of course, libraries holding an item will be clearly shown on the record together with appropriate call numbers. This could then truly turn into an interlibrary lending dream (or nightmare, depending whether one is on the giving or receiving end of such traffic).

How does it work? The question smacks of

the old joke: 'Teach me brain surgery — I have five minutes to spare!'

The ABN system is very complex, but this only reflects the complexity inherent in bibliographic data. Basically it is built on the data base management principle and works roughly like this: bibliographic data is 'broken-up' into various components and stored in separate files.

ABN consists principally of a **BIBLIOGRAPHIC FILE** (which holds data normally contained in the body of an entry), an **AUTHORITY FILE** (which holds *all* headings, series entries, etc) a **HOLDINGS FILE** (which contains information about institutional copies) and **WORKING FILES** (which contain titles being processed by contributors to the database).

The economy of this system lies in the fact that a 'heading' is only stored once. For instance a person, whether author or subject, is listed *once* in the **AUTHORITY FILE** together with the necessary information which links it to the appropriate bibliographic information.

When ABN is activated, the system 're-creates' a bibliographic record at high speed. A user can specify whether he/she wants a complete, full or abbreviated record for a specific title.

Because the system is dependent on strict authority control, before a new heading (author, subject, uniform title or series) can be

permanently added to the database it has to be thoroughly examined and approved by a central authority.

The shared cataloguing mode of ABN will work something like this: a contributor, with book in hand, scans the database at a terminal to see if the title is there. If it is, the cataloguer adds the institutional call number to the existing record.

If the title is not found, the cataloguer inputs a very brief record together with a notice of 'intention to catalogue'. This action provides information to those wanting to process the same book and a warning that they need not catalogue the item because a full record will be available shortly. The originator of the interim record is then obliged to fully catalogue the book in hand and input this information to the database.

At present the ABN system is constructed in such a way that such records are replaced if the same record is subsequently received from a national agency — for instance, the Library of Congress or the British Library.

Peter Dobrovits

University of New South Wales

The text of a telegram sent on 12 February 1981 by the Library Association of Australia to Mr Ellicott, Minister for Home Affairs.

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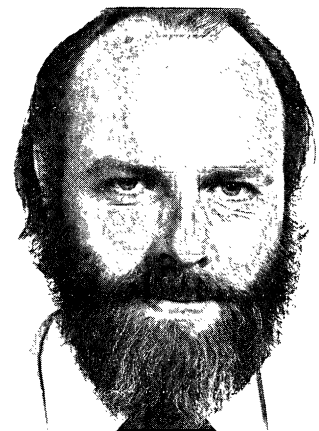
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AT ITS MEETING ON MONDAY 9 FEBRUARY 1981 THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA RESOLVED TO CONVEY THROUGH YOU ITS CONGRATULATIONS TO THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA FOR ITS CONTINUING CONTRIBUTION TO THE AUSTRALIAN LIBRARY COMMUNITY BY THE DEVELOPMENT OF ABN THE AUSTRALIAN BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NETWORK THE PROPOSAL FOR ABN HAS BEEN WIDELY DISCUSSED IN THE LIBRARY COMMUNITY THE NATIONAL LIBRARY HAS DEMONSTRATED ITS RESPONSIVENESS TO THE EXPRESSED NEEDS OF USERS BY CONTINUED REFINING OF THE ABN PROPOSAL TO THE STAGE WHERE WIDESPREAD ACCEPTANCE CAN BE ANTICIPATED THE ASSOCIATION BELIEVES HOWEVER THAT CHARGES FOR USERS SHOULD BE KEPT TO SUCH A LEVEL AS TO ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION IT THEREFORE SUPPORTS THE LONG TERM AMORTISATION OF CAPITAL COSTS AND URGES YOUR GOVERNMENT'S CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR ABN AND FOR THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA

Aust representative at international film conference



RAY EDMONDSON, Director of the Film Section of the National Library of Australia, represented Australia at the 1981 conference of the International Federation of Film Archives in Rapallo, Italy.

After the conference, which was held from 4-9 May, Mr Edmondson went to East Berlin to see the new acetate colour film preservation vault which has been built for the State Film Archive of the German Democratic Republic. He also visited the West German Film Archive Foundation in West Berlin. Before returning to Australia on 17 May, Mr Edmondson visited the British National Film Archive.