



Community information services

THE MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNITY INFORMATION SERVICES IN THE PUBLIC LIBRARY / Joyce Watson, Judith Bowen and E.D. Walley. Leeds: Public Libraries Management Research Unit, School of Librarianship, Leeds Polytechnic. 1980. £10. ISBN 0 900738 20 0. This Report is based on seven case studies of British libraries providing a community information service. The case study method included interviews with 53 librarians and analysis of relevant documents. Observation was minimal. This was supplemented by interviews with 34 non-library information workers.

The authors identified three service models: Back-up, for example, producing directories, information packs, etc, often for other professionals; Direct Service involving 'face to face transfer of information with the

user' (p66); Self-help, for example, providing pamphlets, displays, etc, for the user to browse through.

They conclude that all models are innovative in that the sources of information are often people rather than documents, they are often located outside of the library system and some kind of referral is inevitable.

Among the implications for management they note the need to identify the range of alternative roles; training; equipment; publicity; staffing – including recognition of the 'peripatetic' function.

My reservations centre around the lack of information given about the way the data was collected, in some cases, and reservations about the methods used to collect data in other cases.

Chapter two presents a very stimulating account of sociological approaches to information, information systems and social sciences research. The authors discuss the work of Warren who identified Love and Truth as two basic ways of thinking about social change. The way of Truth 'will emphasise categorisation and systematisation and will seek to use facts and relationships to generalise to rules and theories' (p36).

The way of Love 'which values individual experiences will aim to understand and relate more to these and will tend to treat relationships as unique' (p36).

This distinction between a rational and an intuitive approach, the one 'based on the belief that the knower can distance himself from reality' (p37) and the other based on the belief 'that knowledge is derived more from the

knower's ability to immerse himself in [reality]' (p37) appears to be the rationale for the use of the case study method. It is, they claim, a holistic method ie, it looks at the whole system rather than merely studying a restricted number of variables.

However, the way one 'looks' may well affect what one sees. In some instances we are given insufficient information about how the case studies were conducted, for example, there is no information about the duration, location etc of the interviews.

In other instances the way in which the data was collected suggest a possibility of bias arising, for example, the use of leading questions in the interview schedule such as 'What about staffing? – what kind of *new* (reviewer's emphasis) situation does this create and how have you *coped* (reviewer's emphasis) with this?' or 'What is there in the way the service/library is organised that prevents you doing what you'd like to do?'

Another example is the way in which the seven libraries were selected ie on the basis of their familiarity to either the researchers or the British Library Research and Development and the Research Officer for Community Information Services.

A final concern is that in a study that aims to look at library services holistically the users of those services are not included.

Overall as an attempt to develop alternatives to the traditional 'scientific method' of investigation it is to my mind, interesting and worth reading – whether successful or not.

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Sharing resources – problems and solutions

SHARING TODAY'S RESOURCES... MEETING TOMORROW'S NEEDS /ed Marianne Broadbent. Sydney: LAA School Libraries Section NSW Group. 1980. 141pp. \$9 (\$6 to LAA members). ISBN 0 9099 1579 2.

Once again school librarians are indebted to the NSW Group of the School Libraries' Section for publishing the material presented at an important seminar.

This seminar follows two previous seminars, in 1976 and 1977, which stimulated regional activities in sharing resources. The need for school librarians to co-operate in sharing resources in a period of decline in funding is obvious.

The papers collected in the publication give accounts of various schemes which are in operation. There are also interesting reports of the workshop sessions which followed the papers, with a list of common problems and practical solutions to those problems. Four regional administrators outlined their ideas on the topic and there was a series of situation reports on various developments in a number of regions.

As Hazel Vickers writes in her overview 'A sharing of common and unique experiences was seen to be important for clarifying goals and future directions of resource co-ordination activities for both members of groups and for regional administrators' (p109).

Seminars such as this stimulate ideas and arouse enthusiasm. Obviously the previous seminars resulted in increased activity. No doubt this one will be equally successful. It is an interesting document and should be read by school librarians throughout the country.

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Librarianship for handicapped users

FIRST NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON LIBRARIANSHIP FOR HANDICAPPED USERS: PROCEEDINGS / ed C. Lloyd Junor. Melbourne: Melbourne State College. 1980. 323p. \$15.20 (incls postage). ISBN 0 908176 06 6.

The first National Workshop on Librarianship for Handicapped Users was held in Melbourne on 19-23 May 1980. It was sponsored by the Melbourne State College and the Library Association of Australia and was intended 'to provide a social and intellectual forum for librarians and library clients with special needs who felt that they could offer suggestions on how to improve services'.

This volume contains the papers delivered at the workshop, the text of resolutions passed at the workshop, and an accompanying paper by Pierre Gorman and Don Schauder. A list of abbreviations used in the papers is also included.

The release of the *Proceedings* is timely, coming as it does in the International Year of Disabled Persons (IYDP), although it is known that even at time of writing (some 11 months after the workshop) at least two of the contributing participants had not received copies or known of its publication (despite the imprint date of 1980).

The papers cover a range of issues that will be of interest to librarians concerned with the problem of providing materials and services to people who are unable, because of various disabilities, to use conventional print materials or to participate fully in library programs. Indeed, they should be of interest to all librarians.

For the most part, contributors have addressed specific aspects and problems in a practical way. Alan W. Johnson's 'The Visually Impaired Library User' sets out concisely what is meant by the term 'visual impairment' in terms of both the definitions used by government agencies for the alloca-

tion of social welfare benefits and the impact on a person's ability to access the printed word.

He then examines the effectiveness of magnification and other, optical aids in assisting low-vision users, concluding by suggesting ways in which community libraries might better meet the challenge of providing services to visually impaired users.

This paper and some of the others, including Margaret Fialides' account of available audio hardware and software applied to meeting the reading needs of the print-handicapped, will be required reading for any professional librarian concerned with the provision of service to handicapped people, be he new to the field or well acquainted with the existing literature.

The latter will recall having already read Don Schauder's paper 'Library Services for Handicapped People: Arenas, Players and Stakes' in *The Australian Library Journal* last August.

In short, this volume is a worthy addition to the small but growing body of literature on library services for the handicapped in Australia. It will be seen as focusing on many of the matters raised for the first time nationally at the National Consultative Seminar on Library Services for the Handicapped organised by the National Library in August 1978, and is further evidence of the increasing awareness in Australia, and overseas, of the right of handicapped people to enjoy a level of library service comparable with that available to their non-handicapped fellow-citizens.

On a technical note, it is disappointing to see a publication issued by, of all institutions, a school of librarianship bearing on the verso of its title page so curious a citation presumably purporting to be a CIP entry.

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