

Catalogue for all Australian schools

TOO MANY 'STANDARDS'?

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO ASCIS?
Why such a question should lodge itself in my mind is something I don't want to go into here. Maybe it was the fact that the LAA had just completed a pretty chaotic move into new premises and back copies of *The Australian Library Journal* were appearing in very odd places!

Those of you who are not school librarians might be thinking what on earth is ASCIS? If you look back to the 16 October 1978 (no 17) issue of the *AustLibJ* you'll find that it stands for Australian School Catalogue Information Service.

Is it still alive and well and living in South Australia? Or has it bitten the dust like so many good ideas in the past? I thought it would be interesting to find out.

Background

ASCIS was a pilot project funded by the Schools Commission. The Commission agreed to fund the project until the end of 1979, but in fact kept the funding going until the middle of 1980. The aim of the project was to find out if a computer-based catalogue card service for all Australian schools could be introduced.

A Steering Committee, appointed to look into the feasibility of ASCIS, comprised representatives of Library Services for each State and Territory.

The Committee published a report in July 1980, but since then the project appears to have gone into limbo. Why?

From what I've heard, it seems that one of the main stumbling blocks is that members

of the Committee could not agree on a national set of cataloguing standards. Some members felt that they had to stay with their existing standards.

The 1980 report states: 'ASCIS has an established set of standards which has been accepted in entirety by Tasmania. However, the issue of standards will have to be addressed again as new users join the system. The ASCIS pilot project has demonstrated that there continue to be considerable differences across state systems'.

An appendix attached to the report tells us that 'As a generalisation, Western Australia's entries are probably the most different, and also the most detailed. Tasmanian and Queensland entries the least different. Victoria has maintained an extensive correspondence with the cataloguers based in South Australia and send entries which require little change. New South Wales uses less detailed cataloguing...'

Disagreement

So, after more than two years of deliberations, the committee agreed to disagree. Should ASCIS be laid to rest and forgotten about? I don't think so.

When I talked to a spokesman from the Schools Commission he said that the Commission had received hundreds of letters from school librarians all over Australia. Nearly all the letters applauded the Commission for their funding and interest in ASCIS, and most carried the plea 'can we please join'. Obviously, with reactions like that, school librarians think ASCIS would be of great advantage to them.

Different angle?

What can be done? My knowledge of cataloguing is nil (in fact, I thought 'level 3' was a sci-fi novel!) but if a committee, knowledgeable about cataloguing, has tried for over two years to come to an agreement and cannot, then maybe ASCIS should be looked at from a different angle.

Maybe it is not necessary for all states to agree to a national set of cataloguing rules. Maybe one answer is for ASCIS to generate tapes according to each state's specifications, then let each state use these tapes in whatever way they wish.

Or would it be more feasible and less expensive to compromise in order to gain other benefits. After all, what is the purpose of so many 'standards'? I wonder would the consumers, the teachers and students really notice the difference?

In these days of stringent budgets, surely anything which can be done to minimise duplication, time, and therefore money, must be of benefit to all.

AV and Copyright

THE AUDIOVISUAL provisions of the Copyright Act are to be reviewed and the Association is pressing for library and educational copying to be dealt with promptly and if possible separately from the wider questions which arise from problems inherent in the widespread and growing home copying and the involvement of powerful commercial interests in aspects of the question such as cable TV.

The Association's view is that it will take an inordinate time to resolve all the problems which a total review involves and that our problems must be dealt with now to allow effective use of existing technologies for the benefit of users.

As the only practical suggestion so far advanced for ensuring a return for copyright owners involves the introduction of a heavy tax on all audiovisual copiers and the recording medium, the nature of the lobbying which will be involved is likely to be intense. This is particularly so when it is remembered that if it is to be effective any such tax would have to be applied not only to blank tapes, but also to tapes carrying sound and/or visual material — the very material which is being protected.

In the meantime it has been indicated discreetly to copyright owners that there should, in effect, be a moratorium on action against libraries and educational institutions until the review is completed. It has been suggested that if such a moratorium is not allowed that it will be necessary for government to introduce legislation in haste. This, it is indicated, may disadvantage copyright owners.

COPYRIGHT AMENDMENT ACT

THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS, which are based on a report of a meeting with officers of the Attorney-General's Department, are made available to allow librarians to better assess their procedures in implementing the amended Act.

Copyright and the remote user

The Association, AACOBs and other groups have been pressing for changes to be made to the recently amended Copyright Act to make it possible for libraries to supply copies of material in response to requests from clients who cannot conveniently sign requests and declarations as required from 1 August 1981. Progress is being made and it is understood that the Attorney-General is currently considering making the necessary changes in the law.

Contents lists of periodicals

The Attorney-General has expressed a view that the copying of contents lists and abstracts

without the previous receipt of a request and declaration would breach the Act (see *Australian Special Libraries News*, March 1981). While it is clear that such copying could attract legal action if multiple copies of contents pages are made and distributed to encourage what could be regarded as 'systematic copying', there is general agreement with the Attorney-General's officers and copyright interests that the making of one copy is unlikely to attract an action in court.

The same is true for the copying of abstracts and this is particularly clear where the abstract copied is the author abstract at the beginning of an article which may be regarded as an insubstantial portion.

The term 'systematic copying' has been applied to those cases where a system is introduced which virtually substitutes the copying of articles for the purchase of a periodical. It would be clear, for example, that this had been the case if all, or all but one copy of

Continued page 2