



Interlending in the 80s

INTERLENDING IN THE 80S: Proceedings of a national conference held at the University of Queensland, Brisbane, 27-29 August 1980 / eds J.M. Rickard and C.F. Cayless. Brisbane: LAA, 1980. 226 p. ISBN 0 909915 80 6. \$15, (\$11 LAA members).

The proceedings of this important conference have appeared with commendable speed. Physically, the volume is not a beautiful example of book production, and its binding prevents it from being opened flat for easy reading, but the decision to sacrifice elegance for speed of appearance is justified in this case.

The aim of the conference was to focus attention on the role of interlending in the provision of information services now and in the future. The proceedings contains all but one of the papers presented, most of them followed by transcripts of the discussion which they provoked. The papers and discussions provide an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the present interlending system and point to some new directions which promise improvement. Although Australian in focus, the issues discussed are relevant internationally.

Maurice Line, no stranger to conferences on this topic, was the principal speaker. As well as presenting two papers, Line was active in the discussion sessions, and the proceedings are thus a rich lode of Line wisdom and experience. He favours, not surprisingly, the British model of primary dependence on a strong central source, and he favours cost recovery by the lending library. Only by deliberate planning can an efficient system be achieved and, for Australia, he favours deliberate development of the National Library to be a point of first resort backed up by limited union lists of holdings elsewhere.

The difficulties and imperfections in the present Australian interlending 'system' are ably presented by a number of speakers from a variety of different types of library (though the public library and school library sectors were under-represented).

The problems are all familiar, but several speakers, notably Ian Douglas and Edward Flowers, enriched their papers with data from analyses of the nature and eventual fate of actual ILL transactions.

Major papers by Harrison Bryan and Arthur Ellis discussed rationalisation and co-operation in collection development, and the importance of bibliographical control in an inter-lending system.

Eric Wainwright addressed the question of transport systems for loans and loan requests, and presented comparative cost data which are not readily available in any other source. Other matters discussed included changes to the Copyright Act, the brave new world of telecommunications technology, and the dreaded question of charging for interlibrary loans.

From a final panel discussion, the transcript of which would have benefitted from more rigorous editing, came two resolutions. One

asked Telecom to implement more speedily its intention to establish a 'packet switching service' for data transmission. The other asked the National Library 'to investigate and report on the implications of its role changing to that of a national document supply centre of first resort for journals and reports'.

The latter resolution, carried by a majority vote, brought squarely into focus the conflicting, and sometimes confused, views of the proper role of the National Library – first, medium, or last resort? The Director-General announced that the Library was in the process of formulating its own views on this question, and welcomed the advice of the conference. There are many who hope he will take it.

As Marjorie Broward pointed out in her paper, interlending is one of the problems which is sure to surface repeatedly as successive generations of librarians endeavour to deal with the challenges of their profession. She expressed the hope that if the deliberations of the conference are not the definitive long-term solutions, they might at least enable us to consolidate our ideas and initiate short-term reforms. I believe that, in those terms, the conference certainly succeeded.

Buy the proceedings of 'Interlending in the 80s'. On the evidence presented it would be hazardous to rely on obtaining them easily through interlibrary loan. *Neil A. Radford*
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Outreach services

DIRECTORY OF OUTREACH SERVICES IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES. Chicago: Office for Library Service to the Disadvantaged, ALA 1980. 640pp. US\$25. ISBN 0 8389 3242 8.

As stated in the Introduction, the *Directory* represents a first attempt by the Advisory Committee to the Office for Library Service to the Disadvantaged (OLSD) of the American Library Association to survey the current outreach services being offered to the community by public libraries in the United States.

It contains descriptive profiles of 410 library programs for the disadvantaged that were being offered in 1978 by libraries in 34 states. These profiles reflect the broad spectrum of outreach services that are being provided by US public libraries in an attempt to reach specific groups which are not, necessarily, traditional library users.

Target clientele include the elderly, shut-ins or home-bound individuals, the visually and physically handicapped, members of minority ethnic groups, and pre-school children of non-English speaking parents.

A typical program profile contains information under the following headings: program, program title, location, contact person, clientele, program purposes and objectives, staff, staff development and training activities, beginning of program and sources of funding, program contact areas, materials collections, materials developed for the program, collaborative agencies and/or programs, results/follow-up/reaction, citation(s) in library literature.

The *Directory* is arranged alphabetically by state, then by name of institution. The library programs are indexed by clientele, eg Blacks, Hispanics, prisoners, by type of materials provided, eg foreign language materials, braille collections, and by type of service, eg bookmobile, books-by-mail, story hours.

It is rather difficult at first to see what real use this work could be to an Australian librarian. Certainly, as a directory, it is of no interest outside the United States.

On the other hand, it is interesting to see the range and diversity of outreach programs being attempted by these libraries, and the

extent of resources – staff and funds – that are supporting them. Each of the programs represents an endeavour on the part of a library to meet a special, perceived need.

Some are simple: a delivery service bringing library materials directly to people for whom it is difficult to come to the library or bookmobile; one offers bilingual library services and materials to a Spanish-speaking community; another produces and makes available a 'Home Talking Newspaper' for visually and physically handicapped residents.

In all cases, the aim is to bring the benefits of a library to people who have perhaps never been reached by traditional or mainstream library services.

Australian librarians interested in extension services will learn something from this volume, which is, in this context, virtually a collection of case histories – most successful, a few veiling thinly a quiet failure.

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Parliamentary papers

PARLIAMENT AND INFORMATION/ Dermot Englefield. London: Library Association. 1981. 132pp. ISBN 0 85365 993 1. £4.75.

It has been my experience over many years that very few librarians or researchers have much of an idea of the workings of Parliament generally, or more specifically, how to access the information it produces.

While this state of affairs may have negligible impact on most of the population save for those seeking the 'nuggets', (and occasionally 'goldmines'), of information salted away in command papers, votes and proceedings, and select committee evidence, it is heartening to find within the confines of a slim paperback a full and detailed description of what one is likely to find in British parliamentary papers, and how they come into being.

Of course, *Parliament and Information* is not merely 'all you wanted to know about parliamentary publications but weren't game to ask'. In it Dermot Englefield sets about describing the inter-relationship of the many departments and sub-departments which together form the Palace of Westminster, with particular reference naturally to the role of the libraries, based on his 25 years experience in the House of Commons Library.

His basic theme is the continuing interface between society and the parliamentarians it elects to represent it, but restricted to the confines of Westminster. He illustrates this by showing firstly why Members need information to function effectively, and how this is provided, secondly by describing methods of obtaining information about Parliament and its work.

Englefield's account of the internal workings of the parliamentary information system is descriptive rather than analytic, and at times packs a tremendous amount of detail into surprisingly few pages. Although *Parliament and Information* is published 10 years after Barker and Rush, it complements rather than supersedes that work, because of the narrower spectrum surveyed.

While primarily aimed at the European market, it would be a worthwhile acquisition for libraries having reader demand for English Parliamentary Papers. I suspect though, that it will be of as much or more interest to academic institutions teaching political science, for those sections dealing with the role of the Member of Parliament and the machinery required to support this role:

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