Community information: what libraries can do

COMMUNITY INFORMATION : WHAT LIBRAR-
IES CAN DO: A CONSULTATIVE DOCUMENT.
London: Library Association, 1980. £3.95.
ISBN 0 85365 872 2.

Community information is a term that
means many things to many people parti-
cularly librarians, who interpret it more
widely than social workers and voluntary
agencies.

This was one of the reasons for the for-
mation of the UK working party that pro-
duced the document under review. It was set
up to develop guidelines, using the knowl-
edge and experience of the LA Research Of-
ficer in Community Information Services
and librarians in the field. The resulting re-
port draws on their works and that of other
librarians and non-library agencies in urban
and rural areas.

This book, unlike its counterpart from the
US, *Public information and referral service*
(ed Clara Jones), does not set out to be pre-
scriptive. It describes the general scene and
offers a number of initiatives that may be
appropriate in a given situation.

It informs but does not preach; its only
moral is that co-operation is essential, going-
t-alone the cardinal sin. Otherwise it sug-
gests that each situation is different, requir-
ng a different solution.

Several schemes are covered in some de-
ail, identifying the factors that led to the
decision to establish a service and the rea-

sons for the particular type of service. This
approach could be of use to Australian li-
brarians thinking of establishing a commu-
nity information service, especially if they
had at hand the CISS study from NSW
which lists the factors to be considered in
diagrammatic form. The examples from the
UK illustrate the points summarised so well
by CISS.

In fairness to Clara Jones it should be
pointed out that the public library scene and
the general provision of social welfare and
related services in Australia are closer to the
British model than to the American one.
The Jones' book takes a direct service by li-
braries for granted; the English and Austra-
lian works see the library's role as
supportive or co-ordinating, and instituting
direct service only in the absence of any
other form of information agency. Jones
should be consulted once the decison to of-
fer a direct service has been made. It dis-
cusses finance, staffing and training, pub-
licity and evaluation in general terms.

The LA book has more to offer *before*
such a decision is made, but much of the de-
tail on the acquisition of materials, training
courses, useful organisations etc is not par-
ticularly useful to Australian readers.

Even so, this book is well worth acquiring
a general overview of English experience.
It has helpful hints for the novice and food
for thought for the practitioner. It would be
a *vade mecum* for anyone visiting the UK.

It reinforces the ideas voiced by Elaine
Kempson, the LA Research Officer, on her
visit to Melbourne in February: that people
have the right to know and that libraries
have a duty to make this possible.

Sue Healy
State Library of Victoria

NATIONAL INFORMATION POLICY

Australia does not have a national information
policy, yet it possesses all the diverse segments
of an information sector, few of which are moving
in a commonly agreed direction. The relations
between libraries, the publishing, communi-
cations and computing industries, data base
vendors, the government — all producers,
disseminators and users of information — have
not been examined and their policies are not co-
ordinated. Matters such as the control and
conditions of access to information, ownership
of transborder data flows, and privacy of
information, require a common approach. The
difficulties of determining whether Australia
would benefit from such an overall policy, what it
should be and who should have the
responsibility for setting it are problems which
need urgent resolution.

The purpose of the Seminar is to bring together
those sectors of the information community in
Australia which have an interest in the
development of such a policy. Librarians,
information scientists, publishers, computer
specialists, data base vendors, scientists and
the government will be involved.

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PROGRAMME

Monday 7 December

9.00	Registration
9.45	Opening
10.00	Keynote Address. William J. Welsh, Deputy Librarian of Congress.
11.00	Morning Tea.
11.30	Science and Technology information policy. Neville Hurst, First Assistant Secretary, Policy Division, Dept. of Science & Technology.
12.30	Lunch
2.00	The role of the information industry, Frank Thompson, Manager, University of Queensland Press & Tony Klingender, General Manager, ACI.
3.00	Afternoon Tea.
3.30	Libraries and their role. Harrison Bryan, Director General, National Library of Australia.
4.30	The role of the Australian Advisory Council on Bibliographic Services (AACOBS) and of the Library Association of Australia (LAA). Robert C. Sharman, Chairman of AACOBS Standing Committee and Judith Baskin, President-elect LAA, 1981.
5.30	Close for Day 1.
7.30-10.00	FORMAL DINNER Lakeside International Hotel. Speaker: to be announced.

Tuesday 8 December

9.00	Transborder data flows and privacy. Ashley Goldsworthy, General Manager and Chief Executive, SGIO Building Society, Queensland.
10.00	Morning Tea.
10.30	The role of government in information policy. Senator Gareth Evans, A.L.P. and Senator David Hamer, L.P.
11.30	Government communications policy. Speaker from Dept. of Communi-cations.
12.30	Lunch
2.00	Dependence, inter-dependence and independence; the role of govern-ment in development of information services. Peter Judge, Officer-in-Charge, Central Information Library and Editorial Section, CSIRO.
3.00	Afternoon Tea.
3.30	Plenary Session: Directions for Australia — a program for action. Panel: William J. Welsh Senator Evans Ashley Goldsworthy Harrison Bryan
4.30	Seminar Close.