

Electronic games in libraries

INVASION IMMINENT?



Would you like to see scenes like this in your library? Photograph: Sydney Morning Herald

WITH BLEEPS and muffled explosions, the aliens invaded Subiaco Library, WA. The Space Invasion had arrived!

Children, who previously 'wouldn't be seen dead' in the library, were queuing up to play Space Invaders.

Parents were furious that their children were being exposed to the machine – in a library, of all places!

Ron Ashley, the Subiaco Librarian, said there was hostile public reaction to the Space Invader machine after it had been installed in the Library foyer, and that problems of noise, security and inconvenience to staff had also resulted. The machine was removed.

Are teenagers welcome?

Is a library the place for amusement machines such as Space Invaders? This is the question we asked some of Sydney's western suburbs librarians. (We chose the western suburbs as it is an area with a high teenage population.)

Most favoured the idea but added that they doubted if their Council would approve. One

librarian wasn't too sure until we pointed out that amusement machines could be a way to get teenagers interested in the library. She quickly made up her mind – 'why would we want to do that?' she said!

Mini-computers

But at Burwood Library, in the inner western suburbs, the response to our question was quite different.

'We bought two mini-computers at the end of last year,' said Sue Campbell, the Children's Librarian there. 'The machines have only been operating for about a month, but more and more children are using the library. Each day a new game is put on the computers – a favourite with teenagers is Scurve Invaders.'

For the uninitiated, Scurve Invaders involves solving a simple mathematical problem within a time limit. Once the problem is correctly solved the player can then 'shoot down' the images on the screen.

'We also have programs such as speed reading and basic programing,' says Ms Campbell. 'We have found that children

studying basic programing at a school near the library are using the library much more now that we have the mini-computers.'

What do readers think about computer games in the library? We would be pleased to hear your views, but if you're writing remember that as from 14 April our new address will be 473 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills, NSW 2010.

DOMSAT

THE FIRST domestic satellite for Australia is projected to be operational some time during 1985 and will, it is said, herald a new era in Australian telecommunication – a claim that almost certainly has justification.

Libraries are concerned with the development of satellites because their use of computer and high speed telecommunication facilities is increasing, and particularly because satellites offer a means of (a) taking such facilities to remote areas; (b) allowing the provision of enhanced facilities at a cost lower than seems likely by terrestrial means, and (c) providing new or improved services over a range of user requirements by obtaining access to earth stations.

As previously announced in *Incite*, the LAA and AACOBS have established a joint committee called DOMSAT, with the intention of representing the interests of the library and information sector. What are those interests?

This is a question harder to answer than might at first appear. Indeed, one could almost use that immortal phrase 'we have a very

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STEPHEN MURRAY-SMITH is the new federal Chairman of the National Book Council. He succeeds Barrett Reid, who was foundation Deputy Chairman (five years) and for two years to 1980 Chairman of the Council.

Dr Murray-Smith is Reader in Education at the University of Melbourne and for many years has been editor of the leading educational annual *Melbourne studies in education*. He is also Australia's most distinguished and senior literary editor, having been editor of the literary journal *Overland* for 25 years.