

Electronic games in libraries

INVASION IMMINENT?



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

studying basic programming 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 telecommunications – 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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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 programming,' says Ms Campbell. 'We have found that children

NBC CHAIRMAN



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.

Indonesia's first National Librarian

THE swearing in of the first National Librarian of Indonesia, Mastini Hardjoprakoso, took place on Saturday, 10 January 1981. By a fortunate coincidence, the Librarian of Congress, Dr Daniel Boorstin, and his wife were visiting Jakarta as the guests of the International Communication Agency at the time of this historic event in the development of libraries in Indonesia.

The field director of the Library of Congress Office in Jakarta, John C. Crawford, accompanied Dr and Mrs Boorstin to the swearing in. Miss Hardjoprakoso is the former director of the Library of the National Museum, which was formerly called the Central Museum (Museum Pusat).

From LC Information Bulletin, v40, no7, 13 Feb 1981.

THE NATIONAL LIBRARY of Australia has appointed a Danish research chemist, DR HENNING SCHOU, 32, as its new Film Preservation Officer.

It has also appointed a former Program Director of the National Film Theatre of Australia, BRUCE HODSDON, 41, of Glebe, Sydney, as its first full-time Film Study Officer.

Although currently working for a chemical firm in Copenhagen, Dr Schou is no stranger to Australia. He came here in 1975 to take up a postgraduate scholarship at the Australian National University. He gained the second of his two doctorates of philosophy in chemistry there in 1979, the year in which he was also appointed as a consultant to the Danish Film Museum. During his four years in Australia, Dr Schou was a member of three film societies in Canberra, produced some short films, married his Australian continuity girl and carried out a number of chemical tests on films for the National Library.



Bruce Hodsdon

Mr Hodsdon has been associated with a number of film organisations over the past 15 years, among them the Sydney University Film Group and the Sydney Filmmakers' Co-operative, and has wide experience in the distribution and exhibition of films.

Librarian in residence

MARGE BROWARD, Information Consultant, will be the next Librarian in Residence at Kuring-gai CAE. She will give a public lecture on 11 May at 6 pm in Room 497. The title of the lecture is 'Information utilities: a guide to media, interface trends'.

STOP PRESS

State Library of Victoria

The SLV is facing drastic reductions in reader services due to cuts in the number of staff on penalty rates. The cuts have been ordered by the Ministry of the Arts.

It looks as if the Minister for the Arts, Mr Lacy, will recommend to Treasury that the Museum building be extended before work commences on the new State Library building. This could mean that the library will not be built until the 1990s. Lacy has offered to present a second submission. A joint submission is being prepared by LAA State Library Building Working Party and Library Council of Vic. More details about SLV next issue.

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difficult problem', one that is essentially of how to make practical, economic use of the facilities obtainable through satellite communications.

As a small example, we know that such communications are likely to bring down the cost of telefacsimile by a significant margin; what we do not yet know is how we can get a document in this form to an individual in a remote location on a cost-effective basis. Here we have an example of the one-to-one relationship between client and supplier which is a feature of library work but which is not a feature of satellite communications.

As a first step towards identifying our interests, an opportunity has been taken to attend the recent SATCOM seminar in Sydney. This actually turned out to be a course for communications engineers (once again demonstrating the power of promotional advertising) with much of the content being too highly technical for our needs. But if it did nothing else, the course enabled this correspondent to better understand the information paper distributed last year by the Satellite Project Office.¹

The course aimed to explain the complex technology of satellites in terms that the layman can understand, although to several participants that objective proved to be somewhat optimistic. Also it did nothing to improve one's knowledge of the uses to which the Australian satellite will be put, nor did it tell us very much about costs. A seminar at a less-technical level might be of value to librarians, and we shall give some consideration to putting one on. In the meantime a brief summary of what seemed important from the SATCOM seminar might be of some interest.

A communications satellite is a radio relay in the sky. Basic systems actually consist of two satellites, one operating and one for back-up. By 1988 Australia may well have three satellites, allowing one to be used for specialised purposes, such as Defence. In addition, spare satellites on the ground are required, since it takes several months to arrange for launching and testing in orbit.

Most communications satellites use a geostationary orbit, that is, an almost circular orbit above the equator with the satellite circling the earth every 24 hours, thus making it appear stationary to an antenna or viewer on the ground. Australian satellites will use this orbit, at an altitude of 36,000 km, giving a field of view equivalent to one-third of the surface of the earth. The basic communications unit on the spacecraft is called a tran-

FEES NOW DUE

A gentle reminder — if you have not paid your 1981 membership fees yet, you will shortly be deemed to be unfinancial and removed from the mailing list. Regulations state that fees must be paid by 31 March — common sense dictates that we provide a little leeway.

If you have not paid your 1981 fees, your co-operation in paying them as soon as possible will be appreciated — we can give you until 30 April at the latest.

If you have misplaced your membership renewal form, please give the office a call and we will send out another form immediately.

sponder. It comprises a receiver, amplifier and transmitter and, most important, it can alter the frequency of the radio signal. This ability is essential since transmission frequencies must differ from the frequencies used for receiving. On the ground, the signals are sent (uplinks) or received (downlinks) via earth stations. These can vary considerably in size and complexity — and therefore cost — but must also have appropriate transmitting, receiving and amplifying equipment.

The range of frequencies and the bandwidth that radio signals can occupy in carrying user information is crucial to the whole system. Much design effort goes into such matters as dividing up available bandwidth, focusing beams to obtain maximum power and providing simultaneous access for a community of earth stations to a common satellite, a process called multiple access.

At the time of writing it appears that OTC will own and operate the spacecraft, with the Federal Government operating major earth stations in all capital cities, plus Townsville and Rockhampton. The Government has also indicated that other stations under its control will be established in accordance with demand. However, almost half of the signal capacity available is likely to become available to the private sector, with arrangements for system access dependent upon user traffic capacity requirements. Organisations and individuals will be able to own and to operate earth stations and to lease either small or large amounts of capacity, from the equivalent of one voice channel to a complete transponder. Whether libraries will be able to operate their own earth stations is at this stage conjectural: apart from the costs of the station itself the lease rental of signal capacity can run to many thousands of dollars per annum.

As already indicated, the seminar was not really for the layman or for librarians. It did, however, provide technical background that should be of value in our deliberations over the next two years. The DOMSAT Committee would appreciate hearing from anyone willing to assist in clarifying how we can best prepare to take advantage of one more piece of advanced technology. Write to me at the Queensland Institute of Technology in George Street, Brisbane, 4000.

C. F. Cayless
Convener, DOMSAT Committee

Reference:

1. Planning for a national communications satellite system: system definition and service capability: information paper July 1980: Canberra. Satellite Project Office 1980.