

Flash for Lcsh

A LIST OF AUSTRALIAN SUBJECT HEADINGS. First edition (FLASH)/comp John McKinlay. Sydney: Library Association of Australia, Cataloguers Section. 1981. \$15 \$10 LAA members, ISBN 0 909915 881.

In 1973 when the LAA Cataloguers' Section identified Australian subject headings as a suitable project, John McKinlay, then president of the Section, obtained General Council approval and saw *LASH* through to its 1978 preliminary edition, and then to this the first edition, which concludes the Section's initial project.

Apart from a two-day editorial meeting in March 1981, it appears that most of the consultation between contributors and compiler was conducted by correspondence. In this regard the *LASH* circulars kept informed those who were interested, and generally invited participation by submission of headings or critical comment. John McKinlay also spoke on *LASH* at many seminars, etc.

In keeping with the original intention, 'FLASH is a dependent list' (page iii), designed to supplement the two-volume 9th edition of the *Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH)* – the latter containing headings through 1978. *FLASH* usefully matches *LCSH* in typography and related conventions. Additionally, a plus sign identifies headings and reference which correspond as printed to headings in *LCSH*. *FLASH* spelling follows Australian practice.

LCSH headings

Those *LCSH* headings which are included relate at least in part to Australia – for example, *BULLOCKIES*. (Someone has suggested a reference from Bullock-drivers.)

Many have additional Australian references included; however, *FLASH* does not reproduce the full *LCSH* reference structure. For instance, to the *LC* heading *INSURANCE, HEALTH* are added references from Voluntary health insurance and from National health services, which are not in *LCSH*.

LCSH and Australian synonyms

When both a *LCSH* heading and an Australian equivalent are in common use, *FLASH* policy is to retain the *LCSH* heading and add a *see* reference from the synonym. Thus, there is a reference from Public service to the preferred term *CIVIL SERVICE*, but no change necessary in incoming central cataloguing terms.

On the other hand, where the *LCSH* version is considered to be less familiar here, the Australian equivalent is the preferred heading. For example:

BUILDING SOCIETIES

- x Building and loan associations +
- Permanent building societies
- Terminating building societies

(There could also be a reference from Co-operative building societies.)

The plus sign indicates *LC*'s preferred heading.

The criterion of usage must sometimes be difficult to apply other than in a fairly subjective way. There could be differences from state to state.

For some reason *FLASH* has retained the *LCSH* form *CLERK (RETAIL TRADE)* and

made a reference from Shop assistants (but not from Sales assistants). Also *SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS* in preference to Relief teachers.

Other variant headings

FLASH has sparingly applied the parallel heading solution to a few cases where it was not clear whether the terms should be regarded as synonymous; thus, instead of *PRAWNS* *see* *SHRIMPS*, we have both *PRAWNS* and *SHRIMPS* (they are different although *LC* did not acknowledge it). We have *TRAMWAYS* as well as *HORSE RAILROADS* and *STREET RAILROADS*. Perhaps we should have had *BUSH FIRES* as well as *FOREST FIRES* and not instead of it?

This is a dilemma in any subject headings list: entry under a single term would be closer to the aims of the catalogue, except that it has to be clear that what is being grouped thus is like in subject – but how like?

We often blame *LCSH* for difficulties with inconsistent headings, etc, but often it is national or similar variations in scope or treatment of common topics which causes the dislocation. For example, *FLASH* suggests *PREMIERS* as well as *PRIME MINISTERS (LC* has only the latter), which may be useful for Australian material but does not take into account the fact that many heads of national governments overseas are called premier, but a work on them would belong with the material under *PRIME MINISTERS*.

Linguistic differences also create tangles in subject work. Some such as *MIGRANTS; COMPANY/CORPORATION* and *CONVICTS/PRISONERS* still require more editorial work in *FLASH*.

The list needs to be based firmly on *LCSH* so that readers who consult, perchance, the *LC* heading will also gain access to the information entered under an Australian term (eg *AUTOMOBILES – TRAILERS* and *CARAVANS*). *FLASH* provides some helpful scope notes, but there could be more links by way of *see also* references perhaps.

Subdivisions

Some predictability in application of common subdivisions might be expected by readers and certainly by reference staff, so that it is not really a good idea to use *AUSTRALIA – EXPLORATION* and still keep the – *DISCOVERY AND EXPLORATION* form for other countries.

On the other hand, *FLASH* has useful, tailored time subdivisions under *AUSTRALIA – HISTORY*, applicable also under other subheadings, and under names of states as appropriate. The latter also have their own special early time period subdivisions, each to suit the events, or lack thereof. These time subdivisions were devised in co-operation with the National Library of Australia. Since then the National Library has issued revised subdivisions for use in ABN, but these could easily be reconciled. Like *ANB*, *FLASH* uses names of states directly in subdividing, eg 'MUSIC – VICTORIA – MELBOURNE.'

New headings

Many Aboriginal language and tribe headings are present in addition to those in *LCSH* – with a couple of corrections to the latter.

One of the pleasures of browsing through *FLASH* is to see the variety of Australian headings contributed, and to get the measure of the question in black and white. The number of terms which are unique in the sense that they could be integrated into an existing list as representing new concepts is still apparently small.

FLASH will be a useful guide for those

submitting such headings to ABN for the approval of the Subject Headings Subcommittee of the Bibliographical Standards Committee. As chairman of the subcommittee, John McKinlay will probably see much of the new heading work done for *FLASH* perpetuated in the ABN authority files.

Although at present only terms not in conflict with *LCSH* may be accepted, the expectation is that, eventually, automatic substitution of Australian synonyms for overseas headings will be possible. *FLASH* can also be of assistance here, however more work is required both on the mechanics of the substitution, and on the terms concerned.

It is also to be hoped that, with the Canadians, we will continue to try to have the Library of Congress accept headings for unique local topics directly into *LCSH*. This is an important step; even if it has to proceed slowly, it is worth doing.

For use of *FLASH* in conjunction with *LCSH*, it will be necessary to have some further editorial attention and minor corrections; a further look at one or two headings (*GASOLINE . . . see* *PETROLEUM . . .*) and a confirmation of variant heading policy if possible.

For a library with the facility – manual or automated – for automatic updating of headings once the variant forms are established, a review of the catalogue could be conducted using *FLASH* and armed with policy decisions and the necessary resources.

Whether one intends to adopt *FLASH* fully or only for reference, it remains a publication which was worth doing and great steadfastness must have been needed to see the *LASH* project through to completion.

FLASH has come at a time of heightened awareness of Australian language and at a state in library technology where local variants may become the basis for a local list, promising improved access to catalogue users.

In conclusion, it was a surprise to see the popular title of this compilation as an actual entry in the list of headings, until I read the explanation on the verso of the title-page, in the words of another prominent member of the Section:

'Flash was a special vocabulary rather than a language . . . For convicts flash constituted a common property which all could share and which let them believe that in using it they belonged to a cohesive group.'

I trust that that is not what our *FLASH* will be regarded as! The *Macquarie Dictionary* (also 1981) on page 678 gives as one definition of 'flash': 'Obs. the cant or jargon of thieves, vagabonds, etc.' Is that really what it's all about?

Eugenie Greig
Macquarie University Library

Library sign systems

SIGNS AND GUIDING FOR LIBRARIES/Linda Reynolds and Stephen Barrett. London: Clive Bingley. 1981. £13.75. ISBN 0 85157 312 6.

Recognition of the need for attractive and effective sign systems in libraries is a comparatively recent phenomenon and it is not surprising that literature on the topic is sparse. To that extent any contribution should be welcome but it is disappointing that this small volume does not give a more comprehensive treatment of the subject.

It is designed to provide librarians with 'practical advice and information on the production of co-ordinated and pleasing systems of graphics at a reasonable cost' and is basically a manual for sign production. Little

reference is made to the theory of signs or to recent research on wayfinding and the effectiveness of orientation aids.

There is a cursory discussion of the basic types of signs, their location and content. The various methods of assessing signing needs are briefly reviewed.

In these sections the authors are perhaps guilty of oversimplifying the complex issue of library signing. The information conveyed is sound but is presented in a somewhat prescriptive manner with a decidedly text-book approach. Paradoxically, the reader is sometimes left wondering exactly how to implement the advice given.

For example, the authors, quite correctly, point out that where possible restrictions and instructions should be presented in a positive rather than in a negative way, but the reader is not given any advice on achieving this goal. In this matter the photographs give little visual assistance, showing firm, uncompromising signs such as 'Do not leave this door open'.

Most of the book is devoted to detailed discussion of sign design and production. Major aspects of typography such as the selection of type face, and the size and spacing of letters are covered, in relation to publications as well as signs.

There are sections on the use of colour and symbols in signs and the various materials and methods of production are closely examined. The book concludes with a discussion on managing a signing project.

Diagrams and a small number of photographs illustrate the book. The usefulness of the photographs is limited as the authors have chosen to show the application of two different sign systems to the same library – one system produced in-house, the other professionally manufactured.

The two sets of photographs are remarkably similar and greater impact could have been obtained by including photographs from a number of institutions thus illustrating a wider range of solutions to signing problems.

The book is likely to be of interest only to librarians who have already recognised the need for signs and wish to acquire a basic knowledge of the design of signs and their methods of production.

Those seeking a deeper understanding of the role of signs will need to consult other texts.

Catherine Sexton
University of Sydney Library

A useful guide

DIRECTORY OF SPECIAL LIBRARIES IN AUSTRALIA, 5TH EDITION / Compiled by Gabrielle Watt, Heather Howard and Jean Geue, LAA, \$35.

The library world in Australia is at a crossroads.

Firstly, its techniques of storing, retrieving and updating books, reports and information are rapidly altering.

Secondly, its people – the librarians themselves – are overall uncertain of the changes, and unable to exploit them professionally for themselves and for the people they serve.

And when a country like Australia is still not prepared to recognise the worth of information or the benefits of reading and research in the wash of competing alternatives, such as television and video, the library pond gets even muddier.

The arrival thus, earlier this year, of a crucial aid like the *Directory of Special Libraries in Australia*, is particularly apt with its small but significant contribution to clearing a little of the muddy pond.

There's no doubt in my mind that the much

improved 5th edition of the *Special Libraries Directory* is a Big Must for anyone interested in the library world in a general sense in this country.

Its loose-leaf binder compilation of a formidable near-900 institutions throughout the country (why not include some of the near Pacific Islands?) is concise but highly readable.

Detailed and informative abstracts are given of corporate, institutional and governmental libraries. I noted increasing use of local and overseas computer database searching!

Apart from the authors, State Co-ordinators such as Jenny Jones, Jill Adamski and Lee Doyle deserve a big pat on the back for the obvious Herculean effort behind the volume.

Its arrival, with a most useful subject and library name index, augurs well for the future of special librarians, even if some of their employers still don't understand their crucial role – and class them on payrolls as no more than glorified clerks.

Scanning through the directory – and I think I've done more than most, for vested interest reasons! – it's interesting actually to note the total lack of a library or information centre among some of Australia's largest organisations.

Like throwing a party, the directory is telling in what it omits as well as what it includes.

With the information industry slated to become the world's biggest by 1990, and well on the way already, a chief executive without a good independent information base is scary.

This perhaps is where the librarian profession has failed. The sad fact in Australia is (in contrast to the US and Japan) that few librarians or information managers pack any clout within their organisations.

No one takes any notice of them – they respond to requests from outside executives and they don't initiate action.

Their advice is not sought and their potential dies. No wonder people such as Vic Michniewicz claim that paranoia abounds within the troops. It does.

The 5th edition of the *Directory of Special Libraries*, however, is a step in the other, and right, direction. My congratulations to the Special Libraries Group of the LAA.

It would be a treat to see some follow-through and have some of our information scientists, or whatever, going even higher and waking up Australian management!

Ken McGregor*

*Ken McGregor is responsible for the Sydney-based Australian Financial Review Information Service (AFRIS), which has expanded this year into representation of the US National Technical Information Service (NTIS).

African library scene

LIBRARIES IN SENEGAL: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN AN EMERGING NATION/Mary Niles Maack. Chicago: American Library Association. 1981. 280pp. IS\$23.00. ISBN 0 8389 0321 5.

Few Australian librarians will be well acquainted with this large and politically important successor state of the French West African colonial empire. Yet Senegal has been an essential pivot in francophone Africa and though its economic performance has not met the hopes of the colonial rulers nor of the independent republic, the democratic example of its government has prompted the Western powers to lend it substantial financial support.

It is interesting to read this well organised account of library services which have grown up almost overnight – ie within about two decades, 1950-1970. The problems that

had to be overcome included the hallmarks of every developing country: wide-spread illiteracy juxtaposed with a small but highly intellectual elite surviving from the colonial period; lack of professional staff everywhere; a multiplicity of demotic tongues; and above all no precedence for a library-based transmission of culture. Nevertheless there were a few old but significant library collections in Dakar and several other French colonial centres, designed mainly to support the needs of the intelligentsia for administrative guidance, scholarly research both in history and in the applied sciences, and leisure reading. The rising tide of Africanism created a new set of problems.

The author presents the material in two distinct sections. First, there are six chapters on the history of libraries and archives, from the early nineteenth century to 1975. Then follow three chapters on types of libraries, with special emphasis on the importance of Senegalese nationalism for library development. The conflict which the Senegalese intelligentsia had to face during the period of forced Africanisation is briefly but clearly stated and appropriate praise bestowed upon President Senghor who appears to have taken a deep personal interest in the spread of library services as a means of reducing illiteracy and of fostering national pride. The difficulties inherent in introducing library services (and a bookish culture in general) into an illiterate African society are pointed out but the author also expresses her belief that the Senegalese are developing a positive attitude to libraries and see them as a means for cultural and technological development. Finally there is a chapter on the development of the profession.

I was pleased to note the absence of strident anti-colonialism. The role of our French colleagues in the evolution of librarianship in Senegal is assessed quietly. The differences between French and Anglo Saxon librarianship are mildly emphasised on one or two occasions; more can be read between the lines than the author has chosen to tell.

The book is based on a PhD thesis presented at Columbia University and it is pleasing to note that it has been made into a very readable account. The help of Mrs Maack's husband, an anthropologist, is fulsomely acknowledged. To me, it is a particularly interesting comment on the many factors that tend to prevent the development of library services in a Muslim country where the forces of tradition and of change are so much more embattled with each other than is the case in our own pale and sophisticated society.

The selected bibliography certainly does not reach beyond the most basic reading. There is a useful glossary of French library and academic terms, and a reliable index.

D. H. Borchardt

Book reviews

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