

A First for Western Australia

Serving Community Needs

THE OPENING of the Menzies Public Library by the Hon Mr R.G. Pike, MLC, Chief Secretary, Minister for Cultural Affairs and Minister for Recreation, on 17 September, 1982, will be a milestone in the development of public library services in Western Australia.

The Shire of Menzies becoming a participating body in the Library and Information Service of Western Australia means every one of the State's 139 local government authorities is involved in providing a public library service in association with the Library Board of Western Australia. We will be the first mainland State of Australia to achieve total coverage.

The Library and Information Service of Western Australia is a centrally administered network of free public libraries capable of serving a wide range of community needs. The Library Board of Western Australia is the State Government statutory authority responsible for the maintenance and co-ordination of the network.

When the Library Board was proclaimed on 30 September 1952, Mechanics Institutes (a type of subscription library) had been established in Perth, Fremantle and many country towns. There was also a Public Library of Western Australia (now the State Reference Library), but there was no free public library system. In just thirty years a free public library system serving the 1.317 million people of Western Australia scattered over 2,525,000 sq. km. has been established.

The Board began its operations from a rented house in Havelock Street, with five staff, a capacity for 15,000 volumes, serving three country libraries in York, Donnybrook and Moora.

By 1962, the organisation had grown to 63 libraries, serving 68 local authorities with an annual throughput of 74,500 volumes and a total stock of 530,995.

This rapid growth continued into the next decade and by the early seventies the Board had 139 staff. It was servicing 139 public libraries with a total stock of more than one million volumes in circulation and the State Reference Library.

Today the Library Board has 235 staff and, including Menzies, there are 205 participating libraries. The stock of the system is now 1,911,370 and it is anticipated that by next year it will have reached the two million mark. In 1981 there were over 520,000 registered members of public libraries in Western Australia representing some 40 per cent of the total population. Public libraries are possibly the most widely used cultural and recreational facilities in the State.

All these developments have been achieved under the direction of one chairman, Professor Fred Alexander CBE. Professor Alexander's distinguished contribution to

the development of public library services has been acknowledged with the Library Board's new building, currently under construction, being named the Alexander Library Building. He was awarded the Redmond Barry Award by the Library Association of Australia in 1980 for his work in the development of library services. Professor Alexander has announced his retirement as Chairman of the Board from November this year.

Sales Tax Returns

In *InCite* Vol 3 no6 we very cautiously celebrated the reflection by the Senate of the Sales Tax Amendment Bills which would have imposed a 2.5 percent tax on books, newspapers and magazines. Our caution was well founded – In his presentation of the 1983 Federal Budget, the Treasurer, Mr. John Howard, announced that a sales tax of 7.5 percent would be imposed on previously exempt goods, including maps, globes, imported travel literature, and exhibition copies of motion films.

Yet again this represents an impost on information – a small sector of the information world has been discriminated against. The principle remains the same as that for which we campaigned in the last twelve months – a tax on knowledge. The real fear is maps this year, what next?

The Association has written to the Prime Minister, the Treasurer and members of the Government. Once again we have sought support on this issue from Senator Harradine, the Australian Democrats and members of the Australian Labor Party.

I urge all members of the Association to make their views known to their local members as well as the Prime Minister and Treasurer. We must also lobby for the support of those who previously opposed the imposition.

Susan Acutt
Executive Director

The ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and election of the Committee of Management of the UNION OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION STAFF will take place on Tuesday 26 October at the Tom Mann Theatre, 136 Chalmers Street, Surry Hills at 6pm. The theatre has plenty of seating, is right near Central Station and some parking is available. At the meeting it is hoped to discuss some of the industrial issues concerning library and information staff in the private sector and set priorities for action by the Union

Judith Hill
Industrial Officer

Informal Open Day

ON THURSDAY 21 October the School of Librarianship at the University of New South Wales is holding an Informal Open Day to give prospective masters and graduate diploma students an opportunity to find out more about its courses. Visitors will be able to watch computer and conservation laboratory classes in progress, and to talk to lecturers and present students about the school's Masters and Diploma programs in Information Management – Librarianship and Information Management – Archive Administration.

The Open Day will run from 2pm to 7pm, there will be drinks after 5pm. The school is located on the 4th floor of the Mathews Building on UNSW campus. Further information can be obtained from Ida Vincent on 662 2906.