

The continuing saga of the exchanging librarians ...

INCITE READERS will no doubt have been following with interest the story of the exchange organised through these columns last year.

Following Barbara Jones' report of her visit to Australia (*InCite* Vol 4, no 3), there was John Cook's reaction (Vol 4, no 5) and in this issue we have Barbara Jones' reply and the story from Stephen Due, the other librarian in the exchange.

And — in the centre of this page — another opportunity ...

Stephen Due's story

AT THE BEGINNING of 1982, I had a recurring dream in which I arrived in London and visited St. Paul's. When Barbara Jones later advertised in *InCite* for an exchange with an Australian librarian, arrangements between the two of us seemed to proceed with an air of inevitability. It was with a strong sense of *deja vu* that I found myself stepping off the plane at Heathrow in September, but there were a lot of surprises in store.

I spent one month in Liverpool, based at Barbara's headquarters from which she runs a schools library service. There are a number of similar services in England, which cover schools within a local government area. Books and other materials are processed and stored centrally, and then bulk loaned to school libraries. Some level of professional guidance is also supplied. The quality and quantity of this service varies greatly with the amount of funding available locally.

I visited about twenty school libraries. On average, I found these libraries to be poorly funded and understaffed by Australian standards. This impression is verified by DES figures. The LA's modest aim of having about one qualified librarian per 1,000 secondary students is Utopian (the actual figure is nearer one librarian per 10,000 students). Funding for books for school libraries runs at an average of under £1 per student per year. The average price of a book is about £3. Current holdings are around eight books per student (in Victoria I think it would be nearer 18). This means that the rate of additions or replacement is

1/3 book per student or about 4 per cent of stock per year. I would regard anything less than 10 per cent as unacceptable in my library.

AN AMERICAN librarian is interested in exchanging jobs with an Australian for a semester. If the thought interests you, read on!

I work as Education Reference Librarian in the Main Library of the University of Massachusetts. My duties include general (social sciences and humanities) reference work, selection of education materials for library acquisition, computer literature searching, and instruction in library use. My sabbatical is due in 1985 but could be postponed a year if necessary.

I live with my wife and son in a three bedroom house (very modestly furnished) at 36 Greenwich Road, Amherst, Mass. 01002, about five miles south of the University. The house is located near a bus stop, and we do own a car so transportation is *not* a problem. Incidentally, Amherst is perhaps a two-hour drive from Boston, a four-hour drive from New York City, and a six-hour drive from Montreal. It is, you can see, a convenient base from which to undertake travels.

What I propose is an exchange in which my family and I live in an Australian home for a semester while the Australian family lives in our home. This sort of swap seems to be the only way to keep expenses within bounds. After all, the air fare alone will be exorbitant.

The details of the job exchange can be worked out. It may be that we will want to commit ourselves only to observations, and not to actual duties, at the host institution. In any case, I expect it will be less complicated if each person continues to be paid by his or her parent organization and continues to pay his or her house payment, house insurance, etc.

I look forward to hearing from any Australian librarian who finds my proposal worth discussion.

Richard L. Morrill
Education Reference Librarian

Education departments in England are locally funded and administered, being only overseen by the central government's Department of Education & Science. Consequently, even with the addition of municipal library support, the whole school library operation is locally based. As a result there are large discrepancies between services provided to schools in different local government

areas. The standard in 'showcase' areas I visited such as Cheshire, and Inner London, are comparable to our own. The standard in poorer areas, where unemployment may be as high as 40%, is appalling — notwithstanding the remarkable dedication of library staff.

In balance, I think the central support services do not compensate for the largely inadequate libraries in the schools themselves. By our school standards there still aren't enough books and staff to go around. However, they do provide at a local level a service similar to that provided by, say, Library Branch in Victoria, and this seemed to me to be very useful.

Because I've been involved in the development of an automated cataloguing system at my own school, I took the opportunity to follow up this interest in England.

I visited SIR (Schools Information Retrieval project) in London. The aim of SIR is to convey the concept of information retrieval to schoolchildren, using microcomputers. Users searched an artificial data base for citations on pollution and environment. Copies of all documents cited were supplied to schools with the software. A report on SIR is expected from ASLIB this year.

I was delighted to be able to spend a day with Philip Bryant and Alan Seal at the Centre for Cataloguing Research at the University in Bath. This unique institution is set up, like SIR, under the British Library's R&D programme. The latest research — 'Full and short entry catalogues' (BLRD Report 5669) — confirms my own belief that we should go for short entry catalogues when automating in school libraries. Bryant and Seal are very interested in new ways of exploiting computers for library catalogues. I had a really enjoyable day with them, discussing in particular, subject access, which is the key problem in schools, and which is the topic for my research project for SLAV this year.

I left England the day after my visit to Bath. I had been to St Paul's, as my dream predicted, and in fact managed to fit in quite a lot of sightseeing — all of which made for a thoroughly worthwhile trip.

Stephen Due



JAMES BENNETT PTY LTD
Head Office: 4 Collaroy St, Collaroy, N.S.W. 2097
Phone (02) 98 9648, 982 2122
Telex Benbook M 20482
Victorian Office: 233 Johnston Street, Abbotsford, Victoria 3067. Phone (03) 417 4339, 41 5454. Telex VICBEN M36501

Don't miss out on these Forthcoming Reference Titles

ENSURE THAT YOU OBTAIN COPIES OF THESE IMPORTANT REFERENCE TITLES!

Place your order for these titles TODAY. We will also accept a standing order.

AMERICAN REFERENCE BOOKS ANNUAL 1983.
Libraries Unlimited, US. Due Mid 1983. \$US47.50.
Features include: 1,600 reviews; author, title and subject access index; subject arrangement of publications.

YEARBOOK OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS 1983/84, VOLUME 1.
K.G. Saur, West Germany. Due June, 1983 DM428.00.
Features include: Organisation names in all languages applicable; addresses, telephone and telex numbers; main activities and programmes; history and goals.