

IN THE MIDST of the 80 plus divisions of the LAA it is easy to forget the impact these groups have on the members (and non-members!) they are serving. I was very fortunate in visiting the Riverina Regional Group a couple of weeks ago and speaking to members in a large area including Bendigo, Shepparton, Albury and Wagga Wagga.

It was this recent visit which highlighted my consciousness of the important role they play in their area. In fact, a regional group has the same relationship to a person in Wagga that the NSW Branch has to a person in Sydney, although I think it is fair to say that through necessity the camaraderie is even greater. It is sometimes disappointing to find that these groups have difficulty finding office bearers and because of this the group will fold. The consequent effect

on members reverts to that occasional communication from 'Big Brother' and a feeling of being disadvantaged.

While tomorrow evening I will be visiting Wollongong, hopefully to resuscitate a dying regional group, in general these groups are alive and well. The purpose of my visit to Bendigo was to help stimulate the formation of a group there. We have recently seen the formation of the North West Regional Group in Western Australia, which will bring the benefit of LAA membership much closer to members in that remote area. I even had a letter from a member in Kalgoorlie who wanted to form a group, but in view of the potential membership of five I recommended an informal gathering for the time being.

In many cases regional groups are jumping at opportunities to provide greater services to members, such as hosting a national CE program when some of our branches have been reluctant to do so. The Central Queensland Regional Group is to be congratulated for lining up for a second time.

The geographic diversity of Australia makes the survival and growth of regional groups fundamental to the good health of the LAA. One of the basic services they provide is facilitating contact and communication between those in the profession (including non-professionals) in their geographic area. The activities they host provide opportunities for consultation with guest speakers, participation in seminars,

and news of a local nature through newsletters.

Sections and sectional groups are particularly asked to establish links with these groups as it is not unusual for there to be a core of school librarians or public librarians who would be interested in activities with sectional groups which traditionally have a metropolitan basis. Visiting regional groups is a most rewarding experience due to the hospitality offered, gratitude received, and, of course, the many difficult and controversial questions tossed at someone who has the title of Executive Director of the LAA. It is sometimes easy to overlook those geographically removed from us - let us hope that branches, sections, sectional groups and General Council keep the needs and problems of these groups foremost in their minds. The service they provide for just being there is priceless.

Susan Acutt
Executive Director

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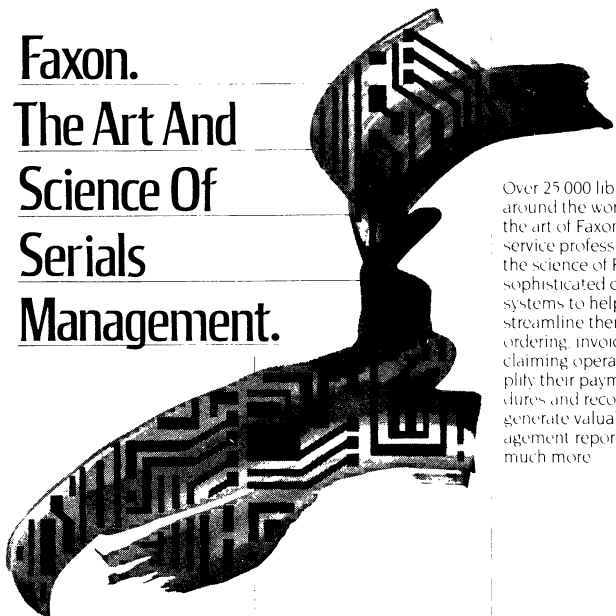
The Association's membership clerk, Mary Sherwood, has stepped out into new fields after five years with the LAA.

Mary joined the staff straight from school, and quickly developed into one of the personalities of the LAA office. Direct, friendly, always busy, she has handled the membership system and an often temperamental computer with patience (usually!) and assurance. She has been a personal link for many members and division officers with what can be a large and sometimes confusing organisation.

We all wish her success and the best of luck.

The photograph at left shows LAA staff at Mary's farewell party. Back row, from left to right, Brenda Pittard (Publications Officer), Judith Hill (Industrial Information Officer), Jenny Menzies (Assistant Publications Officer), Mary Sherwood, Chris Thornton (typist), Lynn Ritchie (book-keeper). Middle row, Angela Brommann (secretary), Susan Acutt (Executive Director), Sue Phillips (Assistant Executive Director). In front Gordon Bain (receptionist).

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