

More practical help needed

I was pleased to see the article in InCite (October 5, 1984) about the accessibility of ABN to blind people, with all that it implied for access to information by print handicapped readers.

Several points, however, should be mentioned.

At present, the Union Catalogue of Materials for Handicapped Readers (NUC:H) is not mounted on ABN, which means that probably less than 5% of books in formats usable by blind people will be found.

In spite of the fact that the Library Services for the Handicapped Section is facing increasing processing backlogs, and utilising a cumbersome automated system, National Library staff do not appear to be enthusiastic about putting NUC:H up on ABN.

A final comment refers to the Report submitted by the Interdepartmental Working Group to the Minister for Home Affairs and Environment (Policy on Assistance to Public Libraries, A.G.P.S., 1981) in which the National Library of Australia proposed the allocation of \$60,000 over three years to the investigation and purchase of new technology. Although this statement was made in 1981, the Versabaille device used in the ABN demonstration was flown to Canberra from the Royal Blind Society in Sydney.

While I applaud the spirit of the article, then, and the efforts to date of the Library, I would wish that the National Library of Australia had something more practical to offer print handicapped readers than borrowed peripherals and a database with little useful material on it.

Jennifer Berryman
Chief Librarian

The RMIT course

It has come to my attention that rumours are circulating which cast doubt on the future of the undergraduate course in Librarianship at RMIT. I am grateful for space in *InCite* to set the record straight and, I trust, kill the rumours.

The undergraduate course at RMIT was set up as a three year full-time course leading to a UG2 diploma with a fourth year end-on leading to the degree of Bachelor of Social Science in Librarianship. Entry to the fourth year was not automatic but depended upon the attainment of a stipulated threshold of performance during the first three years.

RMIT, acting on the advice of the Department which was endorsed by the Course Advisory Committee, has decided to phase out the Diploma. With effect from this year students entering the undergraduate course will be enrolled into a four year programme leading to the Bachelor of Social Science in Librarianship.

The quota for the course has been reduced to 30 EFTS. This step has been taken for two reasons: it is in part a response by the Institute to the reported over-supply of librarians and is in part also a move to create space for the development of an Institute-wide initiative in the broader field of Information Management and Technology. The Department expects to have an important role in that initiative.

Those are the facts of what has happened. There are no other plans or developments in train which affect the undergraduate course and I wish to state unequivocally that it will continue.

Michael J. Ramsden
Head
Department of Librarianship, RMIT

Call for User Comment

The NSW Branch is considering producing a revised edition of *Local Studies Collections — guidelines and subject headings for organising and indexing resources*; compiled by John Flint and Anne Franklin (1981). Comments and suggestions from those public libraries, historical societies and other organisations who have been using the list would be welcomed. Please send to John Flint, Chief Librarian, Willoughby Municipal Library, 407 Victoria Road, Chatswood, 2067. Tel. (02) 419 7816.

A totalitarian trend

There must be something unpleasantly totalitarian in the Victorian air these days. First we have Mr Mitcheson telling us that we must follow-the-leadership wherever it goes: no questions asked; and now Ms Costello and the Victorian Branch (*InCite* October 9, page 7) are proposing that we should all be members of the one big organisation or set our livelihoods at hazard.

It won't wash, Ms Costello. The syllogism is of the order:

Some librarians are competent.

Some librarians are members of the LAA.

Therefore all members of the LAA are competent librarians.

Even if the LAA could guarantee the competence of its members — which it manifestly can't — it still would not wash. Professional membership of the LAA is nowadays about as useful an indicator, nothing more, of competence as is eligibility for it. In the often quoted but seldom encountered case 'where other things are equal' it might, if one candidate is an active member of the Association, and the other not, tip the balance *either way*.

If the Victorian Branch has indeed adopted such a fatuous policy it should revoke it before it attracts the notice of the Ombudsman, the administrators of the anti-discrimination legislation, and the protectors of civil liberty. And if any recent Victorian candidate for appointment feels that his lack of membership of the LAA was a factor in an employment decision, she or he should ask for the files.

There is the further consideration, to quote a contemporary candidate for election as General Councillor, 'that members of the Association, in pursuit of their own interests, have lost sight of the objects of the Association'. One presumes that if a librarian were dismissed on a question of principle, the LAA would not check its membership receipts before deciding to intervene?

If 'professionals are not joining, or remaining in the Association', it may be on many grounds other than high fees or lack of diligence; they may merely be indicating their dissent from Association policy in a simple and direct way. They may also, as teacher-librarians and systems analysts are showing us, believe that another professional body is more relevant and offers better value for money.

The Association would be better advised to allocate its resources to finding out why membership is declining rather than in considering punitive BLF-type policies such as this. If it cannot attract members or hold them in a constructive and voluntary way, compulsion of the kind contemplated will hardly serve.

John Levett

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Coercion...

Whilst fully appreciating and sharing the concern of the Victorian Branch at the failure of the LAA to attract members, I am appalled at the proposal that the solution for our own lack of attractiveness is compulsory membership (Diane Costello, *InCite*, 19 Oct). The alternative, it seems, is to deny our colleagues their right to work. This is not 'encouragement' as Diane suggests, but coercion.

It may comfort us to believe that the high level of fees is the only or main factor involved, but may it not be that some people do not join because they do not like our image and the things that we do? The big stick is no less a stick for being applied gradually. Let me be plain; I believe that this gradualism would indeed work, because present day Australian society is apathetic about being shepherded and manipulated by the multiplicity of laws and rules and regulation. But let's not pretend that we shall have created an LAA which

upholds the right to freedom of action as well as the right to read and of access to information.

There has been successful action before in the history of our Association. The suppression of the LAA reform group some 15 years ago brought about a surface compliance, but also left a deep-seated appreciation that membership of any group may lead to being used as a pawn by those in power. One reason why 'information professionals' may not join an umbrella LAA is that we still think in 19th century terms. It is hard for those of us who are committed members to realise that 'professional associations' are obsolescent. Devices such as course recognition do help to keep us alive, but also obscure our own failures.

The LAA has failed to convince many library workers that it has relevance for them. The library schools have failed to inculcate a professional attitude, but merely produce people who can pass 'recognised' courses. Individual librarians have failed to show their colleagues the benefits to society and to themselves of becoming LAA activists. How dare we then suggest that the remedy for my failure and your failure, is to cash in on high unemployment by frightening fellow workers into submission?

Don't blame non-members. The onus is on each and every one of us; 'we have to start somewhere, why not in our own workplaces?'

Edward R. Reid-Smith

Classification Research

Since 1982 I have been the Australian representative on the Fédération Internationale de Documentation Committee on Classification Research (FID/CR).

In that capacity I receive information, news and notes on FID/CR activities. The most recent arrivals include the minutes of the business meeting held in The Hague in September 1984 and FID/CR News number 11 (reprinted from *International Classification*).

I would be pleased to pass on copies of these items to any interested persons.

John McKinlay

University Librarian

James Cook University of North Queensland
Townsville, Q. 4811

In appreciation

Would you please accept my thanks and gratitude for the honour the Association has done me in conferring on me a Fellowship. Through you may I also express my appreciation to the office bearers and Council of the Association, in particular the Board of Education, its Chairperson Moira MacKinnon, and the President Warren Horton.

As you know this is an award I value highly and I am sensitive not only to the honor but also, if I may say so, the warmth of its bestowal.

I would be less than honest if I did not say that there is particular pleasure in receiving such a recognition from one's peers. On the other hand, the receipt of such an honour and the generous citation which accompanied it serves to remind one of how much more one might have done. I can hear myself, and numbers of my colleagues saying — it's not too late!

Once again may I express my sincere gratitude to the Association for this honour.

P.H. Dawe Chief Librarian

STOP PRESS

News has just been received of the death of Melvin Weinstock, Head of the School of Librarianship, University of New South Wales.

Mr Weinstock died suddenly from a heart attack in Houston, Texas. He was in the United States on his Special Studies Project.

An obituary will appear in the next issue of *Incite*.

Computer Software Library Services

Mansell Publishing Limited have recently commissioned J.A. Gilman to write a book on computer software library services, scheduled for publication in 1985/6. This book, which grew out of Gilman's article on the same theme in the January 1984 issue of *Library Association Record* ('The Soft Option'), will examine the problems associated with establishing and operating such services, particularly in public libraries in the UK, North America and Australasia — though it will also consider parallel developments in academic, school and special libraries.

Aspects to be covered include: the acquisition and processing of software; its bibliographic description; storage and loans systems employed; integration with book and a/v resources collections; and (where applicable) the availability of hardware for home use in association with software being loaned. Gilman will examine the attitudes of software manufacturers to library outlets for their wares, and discuss copyright difficulties.

In order for the book to report fully on current practice, feedback from librarians already engaged in this field is vital. If YOU have had any experience of operating, initiating

or planning software library services, J. A. Gilman, himself a librarian, would welcome your information, comments and opinions. He promises to reply to all correspondence, and contributions used in the finished book will be fully acknowledged. All aspects of your software services are relevant, including (where possible) actual totals of stocks, staff and finance involved. Please also indicate whether you would be willing to complete a questionnaire.

Any help you can give will be very much valued not only by the author and publishers, but also by your colleagues; the book should be of great practical use to all librarians contemplating entering this new field.

Please reply, preferably by January 1985, to Mr J.A. Gilman, c/o Mansell Publishing Limited, 6 All Saints Street, London N1 9RL, England.

IFLA CONFERENCE CHICAGO AUGUST 1985

This Conference, sponsored by the United States Association Members of IFLA, is open to all librarians and other interested persons. It will prove stimulating and of benefit to those fortunate enough to attend.

Chicago has a number of famous libraries such as the Newberry, and the Chicago Public Library Cultural Center with its mosaics by Louis C. Tiffany is outstanding. Important, too, are the university libraries and special libraries such as those of the American Hospital and American Dental Associations. These will be open for conference visitors and study tours of selected notable libraries will take place.

The pre-Conference Seminar is 'Public Libraries'.

World Travel Headquarters can assist those travelling to the Congress from Australia. If a sufficient number of delegates departs Australia on the one day, say 17th August 1985, World Travel Headquarters will arrange a group tour at a considerable saving in airfare and land costs, yet still enabling each traveller to follow his personal plans for post-Congress travel and return to Australia.

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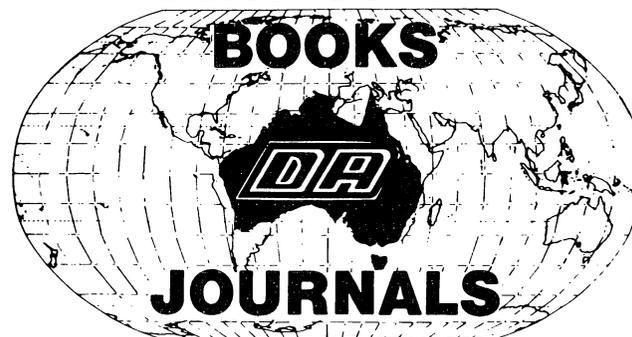
AUSTRALIAN LIBRARY JOURNAL BUILDING REVIEW 1984 and 1985

The August 1986 issue of the *Australian Library Journal* will contain a review of all new, extended or remodelled library buildings completed in the 1984 and 1985 calendar years.

The elapsed time between the conception and completion of a building project can be quite considerable and project details can become dispersed throughout files and plan cabinets. The extraction of these details at a later date can be a tedious process.

In the past the editor of the *Building Review* has sought details of eligible projects at the end of the biennium concerned. In future these details will also be accepted at any time to allow librarians and architects to obtain the required details when this may be more convenient. Data Forms for buildings can be obtained from the *Building Review* Editor, Warwick Dunstan, State Library of Tasmania, 91 Murray Street, Hobart, Tasmania 7000. Telephone (002) 30 2445.

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