

FROM THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS

It was a welcome reminder of home to receive Jenny Adams' invitation to write a short note about my experiences of study leave in USA. Her letter coincided with the halfway mark in my stay and that seems a good time to evaluate any experience.

My study leave (PEP for friends in CAEs) has proved to be even more stimulating and challenging than I had hoped. My project is an attempt to repeat in Denver University Sue Stone's study of the antecedents and outcomes of ILL requests, a way of extending my own interests in mixing quantitative and qualitative methods in library research, as well as of observing the current professional scene in the US. This project, based for 6 months in the Library School, takes me round the Colorado professional scene, as well as permitting time to visit other parts of the USA.

Professionally this is a testing time here, with the challenges of new models of information work, and an economy emerging from recession. Several library schools are closing, including Denver. Despite a fifty-year tradition of library education in the West, and a trail-blazing program in Information Management, it has fallen victim to the University's financial difficulties. It may well be possible to relocate the Library School at a nearby public University. The closures seem to concentrate in the private sector; one notable survivor is Drexel, whose Bachelor program illustrates a successful approach to the twin challenges facing US library schools — the development of undergraduate programs, and their incorporation into generalist curricula. These are hard issues, and the library educators are keen to debate them at their annual meeting in January, when it is hoped that Don King's study (for the National Science Foundation) of competencies for information work will be available.

My leave enabled me to attend the ASIS meeting in Philadelphia. It was interesting to take a look at the US profession from the viewpoint of one of its groupings. Challenges were the keynote. Laura Nader highlighted the ethical problems with which information challenges society; James Miller described his general living systems theory, whose holistic approach seems to offer a more fruitful, human-scaled approach to system design; Myron Krueger demonstrated his interactive computer graphic art, in which viewer becomes artist, entering and becoming the work of art. Finally, Eugene Garfield spoke passionately, if circumspectly, about the challenge the information age presents to library education. These themes permeated an exciting conference, held in a delightful and historically important city. It was good to meet there Mel Weinstock and Sue Burgess (both on sabbatical), as well as ex-pats Judy McQueen and Julie Virgo (next year's President).

The Annual General Meeting of the Colorado University Association (held at the luxurious Copper Mountain Ski Resort) made an interesting comparison. Many of the same themes were aired, if from a more local viewpoint, while an impressive array of local research and development was reported and discussed.

Life in Denver provides many challenging comparisons with life at home — a constant source of interest to my new colleagues and students. In the middle of the continent, and one mile high, Denver is a rich modern city (remember Dynasty?), rapidly attracting national attention for the regeneration of its local economy through development of high technology industry.

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The Rare Books and Special Collections Librarian is responsible to the Associate Librarian (Reader Services) for the management of the Library, provision of service to users, development of the collections, and promoting greater use and awareness of the Library's resources.

Applicants should have extensive relevant experience with rare books and special collections in the research library context. A knowledge of the rare book market, an awareness of the problems of preservation and an ability to communicate effectively with both scholars and collectors are highly desirable.

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It is also very cold! As I hear about the delectable Perth spring, the temperature here falls nightly from 25F to sub-zero, and in October a freak blizzard imprisoned us in our apartments. My drive to Durango, to look at their Apple-based, paperless, regional inter-library loan system, had to be postponed — the only pass over the Rockies was blocked, and I now have to fly; other remote regions, I am assured, can be reached by train or bus. The snow-capped Rockies, which my apartment window frames, are providing an early extension to the ski season.

This experience has given me a chance to explore new territory, (professional and geographical), as well as have time to work without distraction on other tasks, such as the report of the WA PILL Project. While there is much to learn, comparisons have a way of reminding us how well some things are done at home. While I have been given a great opportunity for extension (I've had to learn feet and inches again!), it will be good to return to the familiar scene.

Merry Christmas.

Andy Exon

Research & Development Librarian
Western Australian Institute of Technology

FOOTNOTE: Sadly Mel Weinstock died while still on sabbatical in the United States. An obituary appeared in the last issue of *InCite*.



The Australian Atomic Energy Commission Lucas Heights

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The Information Services Department seeks a Librarian Class 1 who will be responsible to the Technical Services Librarian for cataloguing and classifying material for the LHRL Library collection and supervising and training the cataloguing assistant. Applicants should have a recognised degree or equivalent qualifications with eligibility for professional membership of the Library Association of Australia. Cataloguing experience, including the use of AACR 2, is necessary. Supervisory experience and familiarity with computerised cataloguing systems would be advantageous.

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