Important find at the National Library

A discovery of considerable literary importance has been made at the National Library of Australia. Three letters and copious notes which throw new light on the 18th century English diarist James Boswell and the lexicographer Dr Samuel Johnson were found pasted between the pages of one of the Library's 50,000 rare books. One letter was written by Boswell, one by Johnson and the other by the 18th century 'blue-stocking' scholar, Elizabeth Montague.

The book is one of a two-volume first edition of Boswell's *Life of Dr Samuel Johnson*, published in London in 1791.

The two volumes are grangerised, which means that their original owner, identified as Rev. John Hussey, a friend of Dr Johnson, had them bound with blank pages interleaved between the pages of text. This was usually done for notes to be made, which Hussey did with countless observations contradicting, clarifying and commenting on Boswell's text.

The letters of Boswell and Johnson were already in the second volume when the books passed into the hands of the great 19th century Johnsonian scholar, George Birkbeck Hill, and subsequently to his 20th century counterpart, David Nichol Smith.

At some time before Nichol Smith obtained the volumes, someone cut away Boswell's and Johnson's signatures from the letters. They have, however, been easily authenticated. Nichol Smith added the Elizabeth Montague letter, which is complete with signature.

The volumes were acquired by the National Library in 1962 as part of a collection of rare books and pamphlets Nichol Smith had accumulated. Shortly before his death, Nichol Smith expressed a wish that the books come to Australia.

The discovery of the letters and notes was made by Dr Ra Foxton, who is working at the Library on the Early Imprints Project which aims to record as many rare (pre-1801) books as can be located in Australia and New Zealand.

THE CLIENT COMMITMENT

'The Client Commitment' was the title of a half-day seminar held on Saturday 11 May at the Nedlands Campus of the Western Australian College of Advanced Education. The seminar was organised by Shelda Debowski, a lecturer in the Department of Library Studies at Nedlands, on behalf of the Western Australian Branch Council of the LAA. The programme was designed to provide an opportunity for participants to explore issues related to meeting the needs of library users today.

Mr Bob Sharman, State Librarian of Western Australia, opened the programme with a talk on 'The Policy of the State Library, and Its Ability to Meet Specific User Needs'. He was followed by two specialists: Perth teacher librarian, Mrs Lorraine Hume, who spoke about the role of the teacher librarian in meeting client needs; and Ms Ann Rogers, from Datatech Information Services, who discussed the role of the independent information broker. The final talk was given by Ms Pam Buselich, winner of the F.A. Sharr Medal as best Library Student in a Western Australian professional course in 1984, who presented 'A Student Perspective of Library Services and their Ability to Reflect Client Needs'. After a general discussion session, Shelda Debowski presented a summary of the afternoon's proceedings.

The WA Branch will be presenting further professional development activities in the later part of 1985.

Database proposal

The National Library is considering a suggestion that a database should be created to cover information on women and gender.

Opinions would be welcomed on the following points:
- the need for a database on women and gender;
- existing information services which cover this topic;
- 'Field of Data and Coverage' for BIBLIOWAG as suggested by Dr Lenore Manderson;
- if you believe that a database should be created, is the suggested course of action the most practical way to make progress?
- the people or organisations who should be involved in the project;
- possible sources of funding to allow the project to proceed.

Comments should be sent to Mr Bryan Yates, Assistant Director-General, Technical Services Division, National Library of Australia, Canberra ACT 2600.

INFORMATION ONLINE '86 — EXHIBITION NEWS

ACI Computer Services, Dialog Information Services Inc and SIRS (Saztec Information Retrieval Services) were quick off the mark when the exhibitors' brochures were first distributed early in May for the Information Online '86 Exhibition, to be held at the Hilton International Hotel Sydney, in January 1986.

ACI Computer Services, which runs the Australian host AUSINET, was the first to sign up as a major sponsor of the first online conference to be held in Australia, and they have taken three stands in the Exhibition and are contributing generously in sponsorship and advertising.

DIALOG and SIRS have also taken two stands each in prominent positions in the exhibition area, as enquiries flood in from potential exhibitors in the UK, Europe, USA and Australia. SIRS has recently been appointed agent for Pergamon Infoline in Australia.

Further information about the exhibition can be obtained from ACTIS, GPO Box 3695, Sydney, 2001. Telex 176765. Telephone (02) 331 3221.