

CANADIAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION 40TH CONFERENCE CALGARY, ALBERTA JUNE 13-18, 1985

The 40th CLA Conference, which included the annual Canadian School Library Association Conference was held in Canada's official cow town. Calgary is a city built on oil money and literally developed overnight from a small town to a large, prosperous city. However, with the recent decline in the oil industry, development has slowed somewhat. Calgary sits under the Canadian Rocky Mountains and is about an hour's drive from Banff, which, after Niagara Falls, is probably Canada's best known tourist attraction. Throughout the duration of the Conference I was hosted by Gene Burdenuk, the outgoing President of the CSLA. I was impressed by the friendliness of the Canadians and their ability to work together through a number of touchy issues.

The Canadians were somewhat surprised that their Conference had attracted interest from 'down under'. Apart from a number of expatriate Australians, Geoff Chapman (BCAE), Anne Hazell (SA Education Department) and I were in attendance. Chapman read a paper on parallels between development in school librarianship in Canada and Australia. I gave a presentation to the Committee on Education for School Librarianship on education for school librarianship in Australia.

Many of the delegates showed interest in Australia from the perspectives of education, practitioner and tourist!

The Conference programme was a full and varied one. The programme combined tours, presentations of papers, panel sessions, workshops and seminars. These were paralleled by various committee meetings, as well as social functions. Canadians have learned

how to combine work and pleasure! The programme included the usual fare of sessions on the new technology including:

- Interlibrary Loans and the New Technology
- Cooperation and Networking: Two National Experiences
- Business Information: The Database vs the Reference Book
- Shopping Around: Library Software Applications and Selections
- Automated Services for School Libraries
- Integrating Technologies and Converging Information Resources
- Strategies for Automating the Card Catalogue

There were also sessions on themes well known to Australian conference goers, such as literacy, professionalism, library services for off campus and distance students, and strategies for effective multi-cultural library service. There were 172 sessions in all! Of particular interest to me and to many of the delegates was the offering of a number of sessions on research in librarianship. It seems that not only are educators and practitioners doing the research but Canadian librarians are looking to research results in order to move into an uncertain future with the maximum chance of success.

Intellectual freedom is a hot potato in Canada with court actions, book challenges, book seizures and book burnings occurring on a regular basis. With this background, it was perhaps not surprising that the sessions 'Current Issues in Intellectual Freedom' was one of the most popular of the Conference.

In giving greetings from the Library Association, I mentioned that there is much in common between our two countries in developments in library service and philosophy. Given the interest in Australia currently existing in Canada, it would not be surprising to see a number of Canadians in Darwin in 1986!

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A VISIT TO AN AMERICAN POPULAR CULTURE COLLECTION

Recently I visited Michigan State University at East Lansing in order to undertake research utilising the material held in the Russell B. Nye Popular Culture Collection of that institute's library. My main purpose was to examine American comic books of the 1950s and early 1960s as I am proposing to write a history thesis on the impact of American comics on Australian popular culture in this period.

From my correspondence with the 'curator' of this collection, Randall Scott, I had come to expect an impressive collection overseen by a dedicated and friendly Mr Scott. In retrospect my expectations seem modest. The collection was excellent in its scope, organisation and accessibility. The staff of the Special Collections section where the comics are housed were eager to help and attentive to my slightest request. Mr Scott himself was an affable and generous host who provided me with all the comforts of home. I soon felt at ease calling him by his dubious, for Australians, nickname of Randy.

By the way I should mention that I found many useful items in the collection. The success of my research now depends on my ability to provide a framework and write my thesis. As a footnote to my visit I have discovered since returning to Australia that Michigan State University in its earlier incarnation as the Michigan State Agricultural College so impressed the visiting Victorian parliamentarian J.L. Dow that he introduced the Agricultural Colleges Act of 1884 that provided for a similar institution in Victoria. I await the enacting of legislation to create a similar popular culture collection.

Ian Gordon

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