

Conserve them all my days

by Karl G. Schmude*

'This Ad Will Last for Centuries' was the bold heading of an advertisement in a recent American library journal. Such an announcement may not strike the average reader, wearied by commercialism, as particularly heartening, but in this case it carried a reassuring message: The advertisement was for a form of book paper designed to be permanent. A commercial company has developed a complete line of book publishing papers that are alkaline, not acidic, and have the potential of lasting for centuries.

This publicity highlights a fundamental aspect of the present conservation challenge. The physical decay of library materials is a problem of future as well as past dimensions, for it is being perpetuated by the continuing use, in a large proportion of books, of acidic paper.

In Australia and elsewhere, the bulk of library collections exist on woodpulp-based paper which is destined to deteriorate rapidly (though the process can be retarded by sound environmental management, notably temperature and humidity control). This situation, in itself, poses a sufficient challenge for librarians. It is, however, aggravated by the slowness with which acid-free paper is being adopted for new publications.

One cause of delay has been the lack of an appropriate standard of paper permanence, but progress has recently been made in that area. The American National Standards Institute has now published a standard for paper designed to last for several hundred years. Entitled the 'American National Standard Z39.48-1984, *Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials*', copies are available for US\$5.00 (plus \$2.00 for postage and packing) from the American National Standards Institute Sales Department, 1430 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10018, USA.

The standard establishes criteria for the permanence of uncoated paper, defining pH levels, alkaline reserve and freedom from groundwood. Its official logo, which publishers conforming to the new standard are invited to use, is the mathematical symbol for infinity set inside a circle ∞.

It may be thought that no clear incentive exists for publishers to adopt the standard,

Permanent Paper Symbol



This is the official symbol for showing compliance with the National Information Standards Organization's (NISO) new Standard on Paper Permanence (Z39.48 — 1984). The standard appears three years after the CLR Committee on Production Guidelines for Book Longevity issued its first report on the subject of book paper. Guidelines proposed by the CLR Committee provided a beginning for NISO work on paper permanence, and a CLR grant partially supported work to develop the standard.

since they are, for the most part, producing books for immediate sale rather than a long-term market and may, in addition, fear the possibility of increased costs in shifting from acidic to alkaline paper.

As it happens, however, the standard was developed with the active involvement of publishers and paper companies as well as libraries and library organisations (such as the Council on Library Resources), and it is not expected to lead to any significant increase in the cost of making paper. Apart from an interest in the survival of knowledge and culture which some firms would share with libraries, there is also an economic factor now looming — namely, that funds for conservation are not likely to result from additional allocations to libraries but will be drawn instead from acquisitions budgets. It is thus certainly in the interests of publishers and paper companies to minimize the need for such a reorganization of priorities within libraries.

The benefits of permanent paper in books would be greatly extended if the new standard could gain international acceptance. A major step forward for Australian libraries would presumably be endorsement by the Standards Association of Australia.

*Karl Schmude is currently on study leave in the USA, focusing among other things on issues of library conservation.

Editor's Note: The Standards Association of Australia advises that it is unlikely that they would endorse a standard originating from another country, and that no research into the question of paper permanence is being conducted at present. The matter is being followed up and further information will appear in *InCite* in due course.

ABORIGINAL STUDIES

Aboriginal Studies in schools is a relatively new area of study; for some time teachers and teacher-librarians have felt the need for lists of resources relevant to secondary and primary students. The new publication *Aboriginal perspectives across the curriculum* addresses this need and provides strategies for the selection, management and use of resources.

The publication, which is a selection of material presented at a seminar organised by the NSW School Libraries Section of the LAA, consists of four papers, several bibliographies compiled by the Aboriginal Education Unit of the NSW Department of Education, a copy of the Dubbo High School Resource Management Policy for Aboriginal Studies and a list of contacts.

All the authors represented in *Aboriginal perspectives across the curriculum* are involved in Aboriginal Studies and with the local Aboriginal community. Topics covered are selection criteria for Aboriginal Studies resources, the development of a resource file and strategies for giving an Aboriginal perspective to most curriculum subjects.

Aboriginal Studies was officially endorsed in New South Wales schools with the launch of the Aboriginal education policy statement in 1982. The policy addresses two aspects of Aboriginal education — the education of Aboriginal students and the teaching of Aboriginal Studies to non-Aboriginal students. The latter is regarded as a perspective to existing curriculum and therefore is taught in all subjects, from Kindergarten to Year 12, rather than as a separate subject.

A notable feature of many of the resources in this area is that the publishers and/or suppliers are not widely known. A second characteristic of the materials is that many emanate from government departments and are not generally available. Wherever possible detailed information about availability has been listed in the bibliographies.

Unfortunately the definitive bibliography *Black Australia 2* produced by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies was published after *Aboriginal perspectives across the curriculum* and was therefore omitted.

The publication is available from LAA House at a cost of \$6.00 members, \$9.00 non-members plus 70c postage.

Janet Hansen

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