

## LETTERS

## Isolation

Six months ago I abandoned the smoke and stress of the big city (well, the outer suburbs at least) to take up a new post at Orange, a provincial centre 250 kilometres from my state capital. In that six months I have come to realise how easily my colleagues in the bush can feel isolated — nay, even neglected.

Suddenly the 'Happenings' column in *InCite* becomes largely irrelevant. All those inner-city functions on week-nights look so interesting, but are so inaccessible to the 99% of us who can't afford the \$120 (from here) air fare for the evening. Certainly, a minority of these events have some sort of post-event publication, but most of these events to the bush librarian are no more than so many tantalising centimetres of 'Happenings' column.

It tends to get a bit discouraging when your region doesn't seem to even exist in time and space in the minds of some of your former lounge-lizardy, cocktail-drinking daylight-saving-loving, cordless-telephone-owning city colleagues. Some have been genuinely flummoxed when needing my telephone number, apparently forgetting that Telecom's directory assistance service exists. I noticed in the LAA's questionnaire about continuing education, sent at the end of last year, that my geographical area — a relatively large area stretching from Blayney to Forbes and from here to Cowra (get out your atlases to gauge the size), was lumped under the 'Others' geographical category — whilst the Sydney metropolitan area had its usual numerous subdivisions.

Even the LAA's toll-free telephone number was hushed up in *InCite*! In the issue of 4th April the straw which prompted this camel to write, the Association's 02 number was mentioned twice in the first two pages (one of which was in the banner), whilst its 008 number was tucked away near the bottom of the last page. Similarly, the toll-free number doesn't appear at all in the 1986 Membership Renewal form.

What is the answer to this problem? Indeed, how can I get my colleagues to see this as a problem — certainly, I would have seen this as a non-issue until my move.

Certainly the NSW Branch takes the occasional foray into the bush for their Branch meetings, for which it is to be commended. Occasionally, event-organisers seem to take a deep breath and actually cross the Blue Mountains to stage events in this area (such as an Australian Society of Archivists workshop planned for Bathurst next month). These are certainly steps in the right direction, and prove that you won't fall off the edge of the world if you go past Mt Victoria.

Whilst I realise that I am in a minority market if the latest State Library of NSW public library statistics are any guide (there are more public librarians in the Sydney area than in rural NSW, a trend I would expect to be repeated in other states), I am worried that this isolationism will affect my country colleagues more whilst my city cousins remain unconcerned. This was brought home when I sought out new members amongst my work-mates (for ulterior motives, I'm afraid — a discount on my 1986 fees!); the general reaction was that whatever the LAA could do for the profession was on a city-based level. And the really frightening thing here is that these people are assistants studying externally for library qualifications — a future market which the Library Association of Australia should be courting.

*John E. C. Daley*

(Editor's note: It was realised at Head Office that the toll free number needed more mention, and we started to put that right with the April 25 issue of *InCite*.)

## Oz books

It is incorrect to base estimates of library purchases on sales of books to library suppliers. Mark Russo and Laurie Muller have apparently used this method as a basis for their comments in 'Buy Australian' (*InCite*, Feb 21, 1986).

It is well known that even libraries who obtain one copy of each new title on publication from a library supplier often obtain additional copies (and sometimes multiples) of fiction or popular titles from their local bookseller.

The main point at issue here is, however, that to require or pressure libraries to purchase certain titles is a form of censorship that all reasonable publishers recognise — or they most likely wouldn't be in this (sometimes) intellectually stimulating business.

To suggest that libraries, particularly in these times of funding restraint, should be required to purchase one copy of each new Australian book suggests lack of familiarity with the output of the industry, not only in terms of size, but as well, in terms of quality. Many libraries would not have enough funds to do this if they had such a policy.

Publishers who wish to have their titles widely available in libraries should do a better job of promoting these and perhaps (although not necessarily in the cases mentioned in the article) of making better choices in what they publish. Additionally, all libraries appreciate assistance in fund-raising activities.

*Jerelynn Emerson Brown ALAA*  
(formerly of the James Bennett Group)

## Happy users

Robin Robertson's lament 'Yesterday's newspapers' (*InCite*, 4 April 1986) must have struck more than one responsive chord. Certainly for the nostalgic (and very muscular) there is no substitute for 'standing at the shelves and browsing' elephantine volumes of old newspapers. However, financial constraints on most libraries impose a simple choice: back sets of newspapers on microfilm or not at all.

Staff of our AV Section find most newspaper users are happy with our NMI large-screen readers. The screen is at a comfortable (not neck-cracking) viewing angle; image size and focus can be altered by use of an easily-reached zoom lens, and focus holds satisfactorily over the whole page. Of course, such equipment must be checked each day and the glass flats must be cleaned whenever necessary.

*Bert Cornelius,*  
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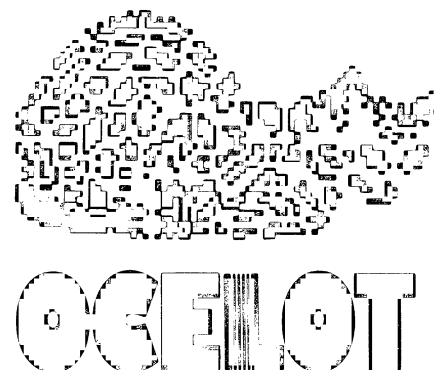
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