

Autumn Inaugural

The inaugural Autumn Dinner of the ACT Branch was held at the Lobby Restaurant in Canberra on 23 April 1986. The Guest Speaker was Jack Waterford (winner of the 1985 Graham Perkin Award for Journalism).

Sixty-five Branch members, spouses, friends and FOI practitioners heard Jack Waterford speak on the topic which has occupied much of his professional energy over the past few years — the Commonwealth Freedom of Information Act. The timing of the occasion was fortunate, because only days previously, the Department of Defence announced that it was not proceeding with its plans for acquiring large tracts of land in Cobar and Bathurst/Orange. This exercise had been one of Jack's favourite hunting grounds a couple of years ago, and he had been successful in demonstrating flaws in the justification for the land acquisition.

He gave examples of other instances where the pursuit of information under FOI had resulted in actions in the real public interest, and demonstrated how the horror predictions of some public servants had not eventuated when the act came into force. The Electoral Office for instance, had predicted 100,000 requests a year, and actually received less than 10.

Jack also referred to benefits of FOI of particular interest to librarians. The first was that part II of the FOI Act requires departments to give a detailed account of their structure, functions and powers, and also to list the policy documents used for making administrative decisions. This has had the effect of vastly expanding the public knowledge of how departments work, and has in some cases resulted in departments rewriting their manuals with benefits to the public and counter staff. Libraries should have this sort of material, for



Jack Waterford spoke at the lobby. It's reckoned he did a good job: he talked about FOI — and by the gleam in his eye, it's more a crusade than a hobby.

example Social Security eligibility manuals, in their collections for the benefit of their users.

The role of librarians as trustees, for the public, of public information was noted and Jack complimented the LAA in having always spoken strongly for free and uninhibited flows of information, for a better FOI Act, indeed for an FOI Act at all.

Kerry Webb

State-of-the-Art Institute in Washington

Washington, DC, May 22 1986 — The Special Libraries Association (SLA) has announced that Government Information: An Endangered Resource of the Electronic Age is the first topic for the Association's State-of-the-Art Institute.

The two and-a-half days will combine lectures by expert practitioners, group discussions and study sessions in a 'think tank' atmosphere. The first State-of-the-Art Institute will be held October 19-22 at the Sheraton Grand Hotel in Washington, D.C.

David R. Bender, SLA Executive Director says that the Institute is a unique forum for information professionals to gain new insights into the availability and use of government information. SLA has developed the Institute concept to provide a highly specialized educational opportunity for the library and information communities.

The keynote speaker will be Steve Bell, anchorman for the American Broadcasting Company's *World News This Morning* and the news segments of *Good Morning America*. His presentation is entitled 'Making Government Information Real' and will be held on Sunday, October 19. Steve Bell has covered Presidential primaries and conventions, the overseas trips of Presidents Reagan, Carter, Ford and Nixon, and the Sadat visit to Jerusalem.

Other key speakers for the Institute include: Donna Demac, author; Donald Marchand, Director, Institute of Information Management; Mary Beth Peters, US Copyright Office; Elizabeth Young, Vice President, COMSAT; Marilyn Mason, Director, Atlanta Public Library; Mary Culman, American University; and Cathy Jones, Chair of SLA's Government Relations Committee who will serve as the Institute Summarizer.

SLA will publish the various presentations and discussion papers presented by Institute

registrants in the official Institute Proceedings. Fees for attending the Institute are \$US350 for SLA members and \$US400 for non-members.

For additional information on the State-of-the-Art Institute, contact Sandy Morton, SL Director of Government Relations and Fur Development, 1700 18th Street NW, Washington DC 20009.

ACI COMPUTER SERVICES MARKETS NEW LIBRARY SOFTWARE

ACI Computer Services has secured the exclusive Australasian marketing and support right for OCELOT, a new fully integrated library management system.

Designed for schools, special and small public libraries, OCELOT has been jointly developed by ACI Computer Services and ABAL Software of Canada. OCELOT provides all library management functions of on-line inquiry cataloguing, acquisition and circulation.

Commenting on OCELOT, Mr Bernhard Hengst, from the Information Services Division of ACI Computer Services, said that it is the only microcomputer library management system which is MARC (Machine Readable Catalogue) compatible and uses simplified tagging. 'It's really a small system which uses similar bibliographic cataloguing to larger and more sophisticated systems,' he said.

ACI Computer Services has modified IBM standard DOBIS software to reflect Australia cataloguing standards, and has also ensured compatibility between OCELOT and the DOBIS/LIBIS software on ACI's IBM mainframe which is used by the Australian School Catalogue Information Service.

Mr Hengst said that one of the most attractive features of OCELOT is the on-line public access which automatically searches references if no citations are found in search.

One of the main benefits for libraries considering OCELOT is that ACI Computer Services have made available an OCELOT demonstration system. For a small sum libraries can purchase, essentially a full functional system which can be trialled before the final decision is made, said Mr Hengst.

With the addition of the OCELOT microcomputer software, ACI Computer Services can now effectively address most libraries requirements for management systems.

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