



the bottom line

Of all the jobs a President has, visits to Branches top the list for fun and interest.

I'm just back from Tasmania where Peter Cohen and Vicki Esmonde-Morgan organised a kaleidoscope of special, college and public libraries. Among other things I've seen innovative use of a microcomputer system to continually remind transport planners of the value of their library service, ships at anchor right next to Denis Abbott's office at CSIRO's marine laboratories, the new School of Arts library in a boldly recycled jam factory, and spent a fascinating morning with Evelyn Barrett at the Antarctic Division library just outside Hobart. There were also visits to large and small public libraries, talks with members and students, and close encounters with Apple Isle hospitality.

Pleasant as it was, it wasn't just swanning around. Listening to members and observing library people interacting with their customers are the best ways I know to assess our collective capability for contributing to current discussions on most library issues — and especially on national information policy.

I have to report a few holes below the waterline of the good ship ALIA/LIAA.

There's little doubt that the political and economic climate for libraries is becoming more hostile. Fund squeezing is happening at all levels. Salary and administration costs are devouring higher and higher proportions of

shrinking library budgets. Too little is left over for the purchase of materials for the provision of services upon which our credibility depends. The declining dollar exacerbates the situation.

For example: in 1986/7 the National Library will cost the Commonwealth \$26.7m of which only \$4.8m or 22% is tagged for acquisitions. The rest goes on salaries and general administration. The proportions are probably close to those for most other libraries. This is dangerous. Politicians and the public are demanding more for their investment.

In pruning the Australia Council in the Budget the Treasurer specifically targetted administration expenses. The Melbourne Picasso hi-jackers dramatically brought to public awareness the fact that grants to the arts often benefit administrators before artists. The Prime Minister is to make further comments on the outlook for the Commonwealth Public Service. State employment conditions are under attack. I could go on . . .

Unfair or not, the pressure is on us to perform — to lift service levels through imaginative management and flexible resource allocation. Bemoaning our inability to continue services often irrelevant for the intended recipients, and citing lack of resources as the reason for ossification is to take the path to oblivion. So too is policy paralysis. Substituting frenzied policy activity for actual improvements in the delivery of library and related services may appeal to Sir Humphrey, but it won't impress our public. Nor will it improve our lot.

Motivation and management, we're told, can cure the country's ills. They can make us better too.

Ian McCallum
President

The local rag

Do you know about the AACOBS local newspaper project?

Initially launched in 1962, this project to encourage public libraries to collect their local newspapers is now the subject of renewed efforts.

Both local libraries and newspaper publishers are included in the AACOBS campaign to increase awareness of the importance of the continued availability and preservation of our country's newspapers.

AACOBS calls this The Local Newspaper Project and a leaflet has been produced outlining the ways in which libraries and publishers can help. Copies of the pamphlet are available from AACOBS, National Library of Australia, Canberra ACT 2600.

Celebrity Roast at Kinselas

NSW Branch invites members to hear Ian McCallum speak at a special dinner to be held at Kinselas Restaurant on 3 October 1986. Time: 7.00 for 7.30pm Cost: \$25.

Come along and 'grill' the President with all those questions you've been waiting to ask!

Other things on the menu include:

- Cream of Pumpkin Soup
- Chicken Breast with Pepper Sauce
- Kinsela's Choc Cake; Coffee
- Some champers and wine

For information and bookings contact:
Sue Halbwirth (02) 88 9750 (w);
(02) 713 9581 (h). See you there!

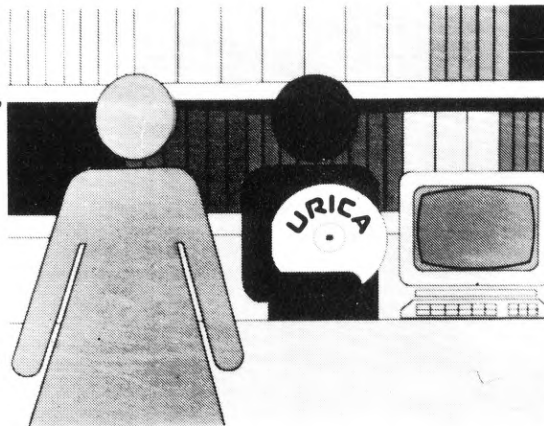
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