

Bookmobiles v branch libraries

I draw your attention to the Hobart *Mercury* editorial comment of 6 June 1986 headed 'Library report an unpleasant read'. In severely criticising a leaked report compiled by senior members of the State Library of Tasmania which suggests, among other things, that the government close 33 libraries because they are ineffective and underused and replace them with bookmobiles, the *Mercury* takes issue with these recommendations as being philosophically and socially irrelevant to the communities they serve.

While admitting the financial benefit of the State Library proposals, the *Mercury* puts forward an argument currently being promoted on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, that branch libraries in small townships are preferable to bookmobiles. It is suggested in the editorial that branch libraries can be community meeting places, places to be phoned to get information to settle family arguments, or simply places to go and have a quiet read while waiting for a friend or an appointment etc., and that 'if a small village loses its library it loses part of its identity'. 'Those who would

close a small town's library', the *Mercury* continues, 'should ask themselves how many of its functions can be filled by the occasional visit of a bookmobile'.

As Mobile Librarian for Noosa Shire and formerly librarian for Mobile Services in the recently disbanded Sunshine Coast Regional Library Service, I offer the following observations.

Whatever else a library might aspire to be, meeting place, drama workshop, pleasant reading room, child minding centre etc., it must, before anything else, be a collection of books worthy of the name library. For instance, how else would it be possible to supply that information to settle the family argument unless the library has the books to do so unambiguously and effectively? What could be more philosophically and socially irrelevant to space age society with its high informational, recreational and educational demands than a system which encourages the proliferation of buildings with miniscule 'ineffective and underused' book collections posing as libraries? To criticise the bookmobile, sometimes with capacity to circulate around 18,000 volumes (a point not mentioned by the *Mercury*) on its occasional (usually weekly) visit to isolated communities on the grounds that it lacks permanency, does not contribute to the community's identity and cannot be to a child 'a place of magic where a lifetime habit of reading can be started' simply reveals total ignorance of a bookmobile's ability to deliver the goods.

The bookmobile, with its professional on board and back up staff, equipped with a strong book collection to serve, on an economically rational basis, many communities for the price of one, aspires to be nothing more nor less than a good library service bringing to the isolated the sophistication of the city. By all means encourage township communities to

have community recreational centres which may even double as venues where the bookmobile stops, but do not, as does the *Mercury*, probably with the best of intentions, confuse them with libraries.

Richard C. Yeate

Australia's that way, cobbers!

I cannot let pass Susan Robertson's assertion that the creation theory provides a 'valid' interpretation of the origins of the universe (*InCite*, 5 September). By any rational standard this theory is absurd.

To take one obvious point, any theory of the Earth must explain the distribution of the animals on the Earth. The creation theory asserts that all the animals were collected in Noah's Ark and that, after the subsidence of a flood which covered the highest mountains, the animals were released to find their own way home. Consider then the humble koala. How did it make it some thousands of kilometres to Australia? It cannot swim; it is awkward on the ground; it is susceptible to pneumonia; and it lives solely on the fresh leaves of the eucalypt. But all the eucalypts would have died in the flood (the flood lasted over nine months).

Imagine the scene. Two koalas 3000 metres up Mt. Ararat, barely able to walk, with no food, no sense of direction and 600-year-old Noah saying 'Righto cobbers, Australia's that way. Don't stop till you get there'.

It is absurd: the theory is a concatenation of impossibilities, irrationalities and misquotations. However it has a special relevance to librarians, because if this creation theory is true, libraries can close down. All our other sciences are wrong, our history and literature generally blasphemous, our law libraries unnecessary. We need only one book, a book responsible for anti-intellectualism, warfare, genocide, torture and cruelty on a horrendous scale. We all know what it is called.

Joe Gooszy

Australian indigenous literature — how do you interpret it?

I am a student of librarianship learning, among other topics, the need for clear channels of communication. Recently I purchased an audio-tape of part of the Proceedings of the 1986 LAA Biennial Conference held at Darwin. The tape in question was labelled 'Australian Indigenous Literature in Libraries' which I hoped would supplement my interest in the literature of the indigenous people of Australia, namely Aboriginal literature.

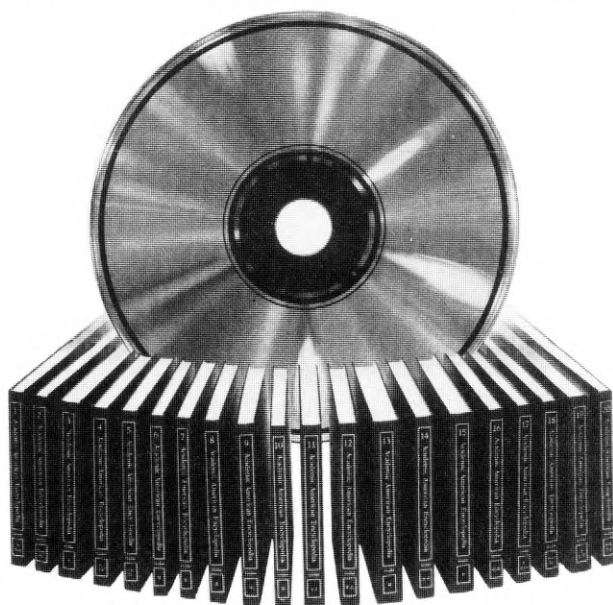
It was with surprise and mounting indignation that the tape revealed to me a series of speeches on Australian literature in general (what I would have classed using the same vernacular as literature indigenous to Australia) rather than on Australian Aboriginal literature. According to my interpretation of the Macquarie Dictionary, the audio-tape is correct in that it is about literature 'originating in and characterising a particular . . . country' but it is also confusing in that it is not dealing exclusively with 'native' literature.

While a country has an indigenous population such as the Aborigines surely the term indigenous when used as the Proceedings' session was titled should relate to these native people? Any attempt at the esoteric use of the word indigenous could be used in its usual sense of 'indigenous to . . .' and thus clutter the channels of communication.

Yours, now unconfused but disappointed,
Margaret Dugoo



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Adding insult to injury

I didn't think we would need to comment (again) on another example of advertising that represents the profession and continues to use sexuality as the selling point, and then to give such irresponsible prominence to *InCite*. What appals us the most is the flippant comment given to the advertisement by our own professional journal.

Considering the present efforts by women in confronting the problem of sexual harassment, such a comment and such an advertisement does nothing to lessen existing or further problems.

The Committee has received a number of complaints concerning both the advertisement and the *InCite* editorial comment. We wish to lodge our own dismay given *InCite's* earlier response to a similar advertisement.

Jinette de Gooijer

Convener

Status of Women
in Librarianship SIG

Moonlighting for firefighting?

I wonder if the students undertaking Library study degree courses at tertiary institutions realise that the piece of paper they are working hard to obtain will be useful for lighting fires, but little else.

I studied part-time for a Bachelor of Applied Science (Library Studies) Degree at WAIT. It took me seven years working in libraries during the day and my 'spare' time was devoted to library studies. My course consisted not only of units aimed at library work directly but also three years study in a specific academic area to allow the student to become a subject specialist; in my case I undertook Economics. The day I received my degree status I was proud and relieved that I had reached the doorway to a professional career in library work.

I now realise I was a fool to believe life was meant to be that easy. The whole thing was a lie. I have now been informed by my employer that I can not be considered for professional employment because I do not have a degree in a subject other than Library Studies. I think undergraduate students of Library Studies should be told to stop wasting their time. They might as well go and sit on the beach for all the good their efforts will do them. They should be told that unless they get a degree in any subject other than Library Studies and then do a post-graduate course in Library Studies they will only be able to reach

Library Assistant level and then perhaps not even that because they will be over qualified but not qualified enough for professional status.

I feel frustrated and angry that I have wasted so much of my time when I find I could have relaxed with a good book in front of a blazing fire and still be as far in my career as I am today.

Pim McCready

Retirement penalties?

It was very distressing to read in *InCite* (Letters 22.8.1986) that a former member of the LAA, Ms Del McGuiness, has been 'expelled' from the ranks of the ALAA and ordered to return her Certificate of Associateship. Surely retirement shouldn't bring a penalty from the fellow librarians administering the Library Association of Australia.

Hoping this directive from administrative narrow-mindedness should prove to be an error or only be misguided enthusiasm of the Association to appear 'professional'.

Alison N. Starr
Member LAA

NEWS FROM THE DIVISIONS

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NSW UCLS

'Access to library resources for disabled tertiary students' was the subject of the last meeting of UCLS (NSW), held on Monday 15 September. Val Moon, from the State Library of NSW, led a panel of speakers from the Royal Blind Society and DIALOG. The main emphasis of the evening was to alert tertiary library staff to the fact that access entails much more than disabled toilets and ramps. Access must begin with an attitude change, e.g. imagine studying Law via audio cassette, and then include, in addition to architectural design, human (librarian) intervention in addition to the purchase of technology.

While the cost of a Kurzweil machine is about \$75,000, the cost of access to library resources need not be that great. Libraries and librarians should consider actions such as learning the deaf and dumb alphabet; the purchase of large print dictionaries and encyclopaedias; producing directional information in a format for students with disabilities; and the taping (audio and video) of lectures.

It is in the area of access to library materials for disabled users that librarians can regain their true role as gate keepers — by being aware of the agencies involved in work with the disabled; by being aware, and being able to direct users to libraries that have purchased equipment to aid access for people with certain disabilities; and by keeping up with technologies, like micro computers, CD-ROM and Versa Brailles, and by reading the Chronolog column on DIALOG for the disabled user, etc.

The next meeting of UCLS will be a joint meeting with the New England Group, to celebrate the 10th year of the Armidale CAE Library. Mr Ron Parry, Chairman of the NSW Higher Education Board will speak on 'Librarians and Librarianship: the Educational Administrator's view'. The meeting will be on Wednesday, 15 October at the Armidale Ex-Services Memorial Club starting at 7.00 p.m. The cost will be \$11 per head. Phone Vicki Williamson at Armidale CAE for details.

The A/V Reader Education Workshop will be held on November 21-22 at Sydney College of the Arts. Phone (02) 692 0266 for details. The Library Materials Conservation Seminar will be held on 10 December at Sydney University. Phone (02) 692 2990 for details.

LIBRARIES TO SELL AGPS PUBLICATIONS

Following discussions with the LAA, the Australian Government Publishing Service has agreed to initiate a pilot project to determine the feasibility of some public libraries acting as points of sale for AGPS publications.

Five libraries have been selected to take part in the pilot project which will commence on 1 October 1986 and continue for a 12-month period:

- Geelong Regional Library
- North Central Goldfields Library, Bendigo
- State Reference Library, Darwin
- Upper Murray Regional Library, Albury
- Wollongong City Library

The libraries will stock a limited range of AGPS publications available for purchase and will also supply catalogues and order forms for publications they do not stock.

The LAA and AGPS are both enthusiastic about this project and hope that if it proves to be successful it can be extended to other public libraries.

Louise Lansley

Industrial Information & Research Officer

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