

Objection raised

The members of the Municipal Interlibrary Committee of Victoria object strongly to any proposal that charges be imposed for inter-library loans involving public libraries, particularly in view of the Victorian State Government's proposed cut in the subsidy to public libraries.

The imposition of interlibrary loan charges poses a serious threat to inter-sectional lending and is likely to result in fragmentation and the breakdown of already fragile networks.

Our members have urged the AACOBS Standing Committee to exclude public libraries from any recommendation to impose inter-library loan charges.

Lee Ellis

Chairman, Municipal Interlibrary Committee of Victoria

A note of correction

Alisdair Wardle's statement about the relevance of the State Library of Victoria to the public library system (in Victoria) 'being downgraded by the Labor Government's actions with the decisions to shut down the large print section of internal services' needs correction.

The facts are:

1. The State Government per se does not involve itself in decisions of this kind.
2. The decision was taken by the Senior Management of the State Library after a careful analysis of usage and of public library large print collections.
3. The analysis indicated clearly that the Victorian public library system is now self-sufficient with regard to large print material.
4. The State Library subsequently distributed its collection to those public libraries who responded to our invitation to accept such material.
5. The resources previously allocated to large print books have been re-distributed for the purchase of such library materials as will improve the State Library of Victoria's back-up services to public libraries.

Frances H. Awcock
Director, Technical Services
State Library of Victoria

Why the cultural lag?

When visiting two excellent local libraries earlier this year, the Ryde Municipal Library in Sydney and the Sam Merrifield Library in Moonee Ponds I was struck by a certain imbalance in periodical holdings.

While the Ryde library takes the *Dalhousie Review* and the *Yale Review* and *Encounter*, and the Merrifield Library takes *Country Life* and both take *Meanjin*, neither has what many people believe is Australia's most relevant and most readable cultural quarterly, *Island Magazine*.

Now over eight years old, *Island* is a

national quarterly which has been described by Geoffrey Dutton as 'far and away the best literary magazine in the country'. Its contributors have included Beverly Farmer, Frank Moorhouse, Les Murray, Donald Horne, Humphrey McQueen, Gwen Harwood, Tim Winton, James McQueen, Manning Clark, Sara Dowse and Allan Ashbolt.

Although my perspective is subjective, as a consultant to *Island*, larger questions deserve consideration.

It must be asked whether there is a cultural lag in acquisition policy, the product of habit and/or the tyranny of ignorance in such a large country. While it is always desirable to have a range of overseas periodicals (for example Moonee Ponds has *New Society* and *Ms*) to not have a major Australian quarterly is unacceptable. In difficult times it is all the more important for acquisitions decisions to be relevant to contemporary readers' needs.

Stephen Alomes

Vice President, Australian Studies Assoc.
Deakin University

Who's where.

Don't forget to send details of staff changes, new appointments etc for listing in this column.

Costing interlibrary loans

Despite recent letters in *InCite* to the contrary I think there is wide acceptance of the concept that interlibrary loan and document supply services should be paid for by the libraries requesting documents. This has led to a serious interest in costing the interlibrary loan operation on a national scale so that a fee for this service can be set at a realistic level. There are already accepted methods for costing interlibrary loan operations in a particular library, eg Elizabeth Watson's *Study of costs of the inter-library loan system at the Australian National University*, Canberra, Australian National University, 1978.

Even so I would like to make some comments on what data should be collected and reported if this project is to go ahead on a national scale.

At present determination of costs is likely to focus on costs of supplying documents by major net lenders. In my view costs should also be determined for some smaller suppliers including some net borrowers. After all, in aggregate these smaller suppliers contribute substantially to document supply.

There should be a simultaneous attempt to get costs for making requests. Because of the close relationship between requesting and

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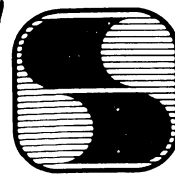
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applying operations in most libraries, relatively little additional effort in the libraries applying data should be involved in collecting this additional data.

In costing these operations care should be taken to exclude transactions that are not interlibrary loans proper, eg loans between branches and various campuses of multi-campus institutions. These costs may well be of interest to the institutions concerned but they do not affect the striking of a reasonable fee for services between libraries.

It is likely that costs associated with serial items are different to costs for monographs and other materials. There should be an attempt to differentiate between items with greatly different costs. Perhaps rather than dealing with the problem of defining these various categories it might be better to distinguish between cases where the item in question is actually lent and those cases where a photocopy or other substitute is supplied.

Data should also be collected on the incidence and costs of making and processing requests when the requested item is not supplied. This will allow for a separate fee for unsuccessful requests or absorbing the cost of such requests into the fee for successful requests.

There are some costs that I believe should definitely not be included in the fee for interlibrary loan services. These include the costs of acquiring, cataloguing, curating and storing materials requested on interlibrary loan. Inclusion of these costs could only be justified if a library with the specific role of supplying documents on interlibrary loan.

There are some other costs that could arguably be included in the fee for interlibrary loan service. These include for example, overheads of various types and depreciation of equipment. Methods for calculating, or ignoring, these costs vary widely from library to library and special care would have to be taken in estimating and reporting these costs.

Any estimate of costs will be expensive to obtain and will need to be updated from time to time. This indicates that data should be collected, analysed and reported in terms of cost elements that can be indexed relatively easily, eg cost of labour at various levels, postage, electronic mail, photocopies, fax transmission etc.

If traffic patterns, modes of message transmission and other practices change then another survey would be needed to accurately determine the costs of requesting and supplying documents on interlibrary loan, but in the meantime costs could be updated more easily if the original report of costs is in terms of indexable cost elements.

Ian Douglas
Swinburne Library

Not avoiding the ILL issue!

Deakin University's attitude to charging for the interlibrary loan of books is one of implacable opposition. We believe this to be an attack on the principle of resource sharing. In fact, although we are now a net lender, we still do not charge local libraries for photocopies of articles, and we were the last Australian academic library to start charging for photocopies.

I thought our attitude was so well known it would be boring to repeat it, but I now realise that you can never say something worth saying, too often!

Margaret A. Cameron
Chief Librarian

OBITUARY
Robin Kavanagh

The death occurred early this year of Robin Kavanagh, Primary Assistant and former teacher-librarian at St John Bosco Primary School, Engadine. Robin's tremendous enthusiasm, creativity and generosity were well known to all those teacher-librarians who attended the Catholic Education Office library courses where she so generously shared her ideas with participants.

She gave so much to the children and the library at St John Bosco School, to any teacher-librarian who sought her help and to many library associated groups such as the

local resource sharing group. Robin was a Committee Member of the LAA School Libraries Section (NSW group) and until shortly before her final illness she was working with other IBBY members to help produce the forthcoming edition of *The New Classics*.

It is therefore very fitting that this publication will be dedicated to Robin, and that the school will have an annual literature award in her memory. Her death at only 43 is a sad loss to her school, to all those teacher-librarians who came in contact with her, and especially to her husband Alan and sons Justin and Stuart.

Judy Bull
Committee Member
School Libraries Section (NSW Group)

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