

NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

National Information Policy

In November 1986 General Council put National Information Policy at the top of its list of priorities, along with membership recruitment and retention. It requested all states hold NIP seminars within the next 12 months to familiarise the profession with NIP issues and to ensure that all members of the Association were able to put forward a case for NIP.

So far this year three states — South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia — have held National Information Policy seminars and I was privileged to attend and speak at seminars held in Queensland and Western Australia on 29 May and 2 June respectively. Both seminars were tremendously successful, with very enthusiastic participation from a good number of delegates, and it was interesting to see that NIP is certainly creating an interest among members of the Association.

As reported in an earlier issue of *InCite*, General Council made three major decisions on National Information Policy at its April meeting. Firstly, it adopted a NIP statement, which appeared in *InCite* No. 7, secondly it endorsed a proposal put forward by the Past President, Ian McCallum, to set up a program of model libraries, and thirdly, it established a working party to develop the Association's strategy on National Information Policy. It also made General Councillors the state contact for NIP.

The working party met on 25 May and considered a number of areas for further action. Firstly, it looked more closely at the model libraries proposal and asked Ian McCallum to prepare a detailed paper for state Branches of the Association, outlining exactly how the program would work. The paper asks each state and territory to identify a list of libraries which could be used for visiting politicians, senior bureaucrats, etc. It is proposed that the visits be tailor-made to suit the individual needs of the person being shown the libraries. It is believed that the program will heighten public awareness and be far more effective than paper submissions on NIP. The McCallum paper is now available and those

people interested may obtain a copy by contacting me at Head Office.

The working party also looked at the preparation of a lobbying kit and this is being prepared by Alex Byrne who is going to include things like the LAA Statement on NIP, a list of facts on NIP, a list suggesting people to lobby, information about lobbyists, suggested promotional activities, the McCallum paper on the model libraries program, a bibliography on National Information Policy, and LAA contacts who will be useful during the lobbying process. It is proposed that the kit will be ready by September 1987.

The third area of interest to the working party was an advertising campaign, and we are currently looking at the cost of running advertisements in newspapers and on radio, and possibly television. Such advertising is expensive and the possibility of obtaining sponsors for this campaign is currently being explored. The working party is also trying to get articles on NIP published in relevant journals, and a list of these is presently being drawn up.

The fourth area which the working party considered was a petition to the Government calling for a National Information Policy. The working party was not sure whether petitions are effective, and it was noted that it is absolutely vital that it is presented to the right person and is accompanied by a great deal of publicity. The idea of a petition would be to get signatures from the library profession and, more importantly, from library users, but it was recognised that such a petition would be a lot of work. It has therefore been decided to seek the views of some supportive politicians to judge the value of such an effort.

The working party also endorsed the Cabinet submission which is being prepared by the Department of Science. This has been in preparation for some time and the most recent draft is now available. The submission calls for the setting up of an Australian Council on Information Policy and the Association has endorsed the general thrust of this document. It is obvious that there will be no action on the Cabinet submission until after the 11 July election, but it is hoped that the submission will receive attention in the not too distant future.

The one message coming out of the seminars on National Information Policy is that as a profession librarians are not good lobby-

ists and that it is vitally important that we lift our game. As Ian McCallum pointed out last year when he and I attended a meeting with the Minister for Science, Barry Jones, we were probably the only librarians talking to a politician that month.

If we are to be successful in our National Information Policy campaign it is critical that the whole profession becomes aware of the importance of National Information Policy and plays its part by lobbying its Federal Member.

If you are interested in finding out more about what you can do to help in this campaign, please contact your state General Councillor or the Director or Educational and Industrial Services Manager at LAA Head Office.

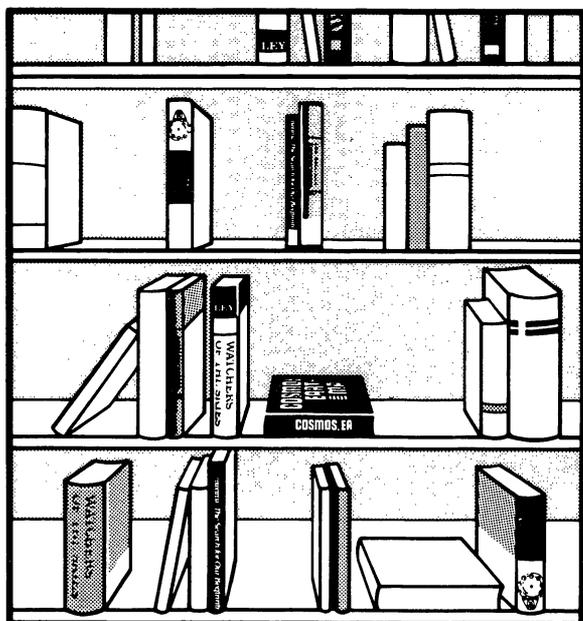
Professional Indemnity Insurance

The Association has recently looked at the possibility of offering professional indemnity insurance to its members. For a number of years there have been people within the profession who have raised the question of legal responsibility of librarians, and the matter of professional indemnity has been discussed, particularly in the field of medical libraries.

The Association has decided not to go ahead with offering professional indemnity insurance because the premiums are very expensive, and with the quotes we received in the vicinity of about \$600 per annum per person. The advice we received from our insurance brokers indicates that most librarians who are in permanent employment would be covered by a professional indemnity policy carried by their employer. The persons who are most at risk, and it should be emphasised that the risk is small compared to professions such as architecture and medicine, are librarians who are working on a consultancy basis. It would appear that there are only two insurance companies in Australia offering professional indemnity insurance.

Should any member require further information I would be happy to pass on what I know, however I must emphasise that there is only a slight risk to members of the Association and this is primarily in the area of the self-employed.

Jenny Adams
Director



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