

On the Government Publications front

Peter Clayton, the LAA's representative on the AGPS-AACOBS Liaison Committee reports on recent developments in this area.

Parliamentary papers

Many librarians will have been concerned at the proposals recommended by the Commonwealth Parliament's Joint Committee on Publications regarding the bound *Parliamentary Papers* series. (Australia Parliament Joint Committee on Publications *Review of the costs and distribution of the Parliamentary Papers series*. Tabled on 26 November 1986, but not ordered to be printed.)

These proposals are: that reserve stocks no longer be maintained; and that bound copies no longer be sent free of charge to Commonwealth Departments, Municipal libraries, Universities, Colleges of Advanced Education, Commonwealth Parliament Offices, and some overseas libraries.

So far no decision has been made but the government is hoping to make an announcement during June. Anyone concerned at these recommendations should make representa-

tions to John Brown, Minister for Sport, Recreation and Tourism (not to the Joint Committee). It would be most unfortunate if some of these libraries were to receive only single copies of the unbound papers, especially as most make their unbound issues publicly available on receipt, risking possible loss.

More encouraging is the news that the Commonwealth Parliament is considering producing microfiche sets of the Parliamentary Papers and of Hansard covering the period from Federation to well after the Second World War. Such sets should be of special value to libraries whose bound volumes are badly worn or incomplete.

AALC

At its March meeting the Australian Government Publishing Service (AGPS) — AACOBS Liaison Committee was informed of many changes taking place at AGPS itself and to its publications. Frank Thompson is now responsible for AGPS marketing as well as publishing, and AGPS is generally adopting a more commercial thrust. As well as marketing publications they are now marketing their services to the government community. These changes have been assisted by the re-location of all AGPS staff under one roof. The establishment of *AGPS Press* is an outcome of this changing emphasis.

Electronic publishing

Frank Thompson advised the Committee that AGPS was chairing a government committee looking at electronic publishing and which was expected to make a submission to Cabinet later this year.

AGPS itself is considering the establishment of an 'out-of-print publication on demand service', based on laser printing from optical disc. This could be especially useful in areas such as legislation. It would be offered at AGPS bookshops.

The *Commonwealth directory* will be made available online, probably from July, through a commercial agency with whom a contract has been signed. It will continue to be published in hard copy, but now twice a year. The next edition is due in June. The freedom of information details formerly published in association with the *Directory* will in future be produced as part of departmental and agency annual reports.

The *Commonwealth record* may be made available online alongside the *Directory*; hard copy publication of this is however at risk because of the short print run. The 1986 index to the *Record* has just been published; the 1985 has still not been completed due to staff shortages. (AGPS decided to give priority to indexing the more recent information.)

The AGPS' marketing catalogue is to be made available through ACI's BOOKNET service. (Note that this includes only material listed in the monthly catalogues, not the full coverage of the weekly lists.)

AGPS Publications

Other AGPS publications discussed included the 1986 *Annual catalogue*. This is currently in press, and because of its size is likely to cost about \$40. AGPS sought advice on the desirability of producing it only in microfiche format in future: how would this affect you? Your advice and comment would be welcomed.

The *Style manual* will appear in 1988 over the AGPS Press imprint; it will incorporate major changes and is to be continuously revised thereafter.

It is proposed that the *Gazette* be self-supporting from July, with departments and agencies paying to advertise in it, and paying for copies received. The Freedom of Information issues ceased with No. 46, the Social Security issue of 31 December 1986, but the General series is to be split into government notices and a business gazette, so returning the *Gazette* to eight series. Staff shortages have precluded indexing it and the last index is still January-June 1985.

Other matters

The Secretary of AALC tabled a report on the operation of the free issue scheme to University libraries, and revised guidelines and objectives of the deposit and free issue scheme (copies of these are available from me). Not all free issue recipients had responded to the request for a report; those which did found most material received very valuable. The main problem reported was that of consignment lists. Some problems of non-receipt of loose-leaf items in particular were raised at the meeting.

The Committee asked AGPS to consider the practicability of an Australian statement on Crown copyright and photocopying. The United Kingdom statement was tabled.

The value of the Committee as a formal channel for communication from AGPS to the library community is very apparent, particularly at a time when AGPS is itself undergoing so many changes. However the Publishing Service is also looking to AALC to provide feedback to it on 'problems of provision of access to Australian government publications, including their bibliographic control and distribution'. Any comments on Commonwealth government publication issues would be welcomed by me c/- Canberra College of Advanced Education (062) 52-2246; by Ann Miller, La Trobe University (03) 478-3122 ext. 2943; or by the Secretary of AALC, Michael Harrington AGPS, (062) 95-4655.

The future for Commonwealth government publications seems very likely to be one where the emphasis is on cost recovery and commercial viability, and where the publications and services on which libraries and their clients rely are re-evaluated in this light. In such a climate there may well be increased value in a forum such as AALC provides.

Peter Clayton
LAA Representative, AALC

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