

# The Smart Book

In the 19 June 1987 issue of *InCite*, Katie Blake debated the prospect of an electronic book, in *Under Currents*. 'Books will always have a place, they say, and they are right. But an electronic book sure does seem like a logical progression . . .' she said, ' . . . and it will happen sooner than you think!'

The launch of the world's first electronic book, the *Smart Book*, was held recently at the Grace Bros Book Fair, Sydney.

A unique blend of computer and traditional book, the size and weight of your average hardback, it is complete with screen and a six touch-button control panel. It also runs off batteries for total portability.

### How it works

The *Smart Book* or reader, reads information from a 2cm sq silicon chip, enclosed in a plastic disk the size of a credit card. This disk is fed into the reader and can store approximately 50 paperbacks on one disk.

It also has other facilities common to an average PC, such as menu guides, scroll, browse and a search facility. It can search through the whole of the Bible to find a particular word in only 31 seconds.

The screen is backlit, and to minimise eye

strain, a choice of various type sizes and font styles are available for improved readability.

### An alternative

The producers of *Smart Book*, Weldon-Hardie Pty Ltd, are careful to state that this unique form of communication will not immediately replace the printed novel, newspapers or magazines, but, will stand side-by-side with them as an alternative. However, the Weldon-Hardie team is confident that it will have an immediate impact on works such as directories, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, and many other forms of reference.

### World first

This innovative piece of technology was the invention of three men – industrial designer, Tom Treseder, accountant, David Jamieson, and research and development manager, Roger Purcell. Together they formed a company called Megaword and with the support of Kevin Weldon, publisher of the Macquarie Dictionary, and the James Hardie Group, the project began.

After consultation with American publishers, it was confirmed that nothing of this ilk is available in the USA, UK or Europe and that the *Smart Book* is a world first.

Given the durability, size and large memory capacity of the disks, the *Book* may be the answer to our paper shortage, conservation and storage problems. Reference librarians, in particular, may well want to take advantage of these facts. However, at \$500 for a reader, the average reference user may prefer the more conventional forms of reference.

## Australian Book Trade Committee News

### Standard Format for Book Ordering

After careful consideration the Australian Book Trade Committee recommends the use of the American National Standard for Computerised Book Ordering (ANSI Z39.49-1985) within Australia.

This standard which was developed by the US Book Industry Systems Advisory Committee (BISAC), comprises a fixed record length format and a variable record length format.

Nearly one hundred organisations are currently using these formats in the US.

The ABTC is in the process of listing a small number of variations which will make the standard more suitable for Australian use. This list will be issued as a brief addendum to the standard.

Further information may be obtained from Bill Cations, Deputy University Librarian, The Library, Flinders University of South Australia, Bedford Park, SA 5042

The ABTC Standards Working Group is now examining the BISAC formats for Invoice Communications and Title Status to ascertain their suitability for use within Australia. Comments and suggestions relating to these two formats would be welcome.

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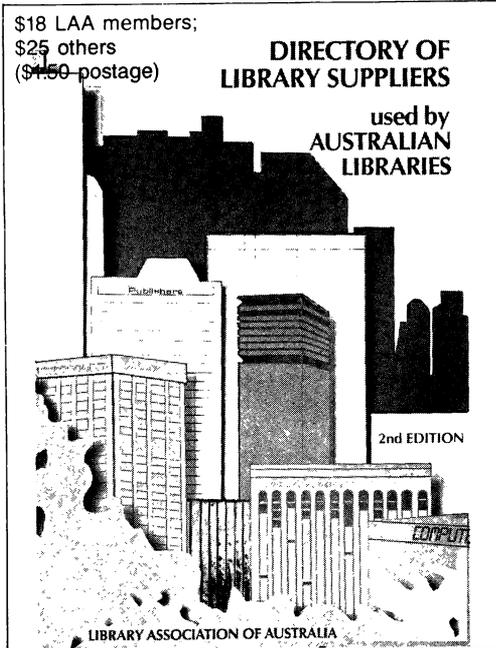
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