



Cramped Bicentennial biennial

I have just received a copy of the IFLA/LAA conference program for 1988 and it has confirmed my worst fears. The order of the initials has more than alphabetic significance. The LAA section of the conference has been compressed into slightly less than two and a half days compared with the usual four and a half days. For this attenuated programme I am expected to pay \$250 or \$70 more than the Darwin conference that went the full distance. Part of this time saving has come about by the reprehensible introduction of breakfast meetings to cater for AGMs but there has also been a reduction in content with no general plenary sessions and a smorgasbord of concurrent sessions ensuring attendance to only a smattering of papers.

IFLA on the other hand extends over nearly four days and very little hard information is provided as to its content, save some subject headings and mention of Divisions, Sectional and Round Tables, little of which makes sense to those not fortunate enough to belong to the international cognoscenti who attend IFLA on a regular basis. Granted there may be some pearls embedded in the program but past experience indicates that the majority of IFLA deliberations are arcane and result from the committees rather than the papers given. I feel that members of the LAA have been sold short by the executive in that the desire to host IFLA has overshadowed the traditional role of the Biennial Conference to provide an adequate forum for the discussion of matters pertinent to the profession in Australia.

I have been a regular attendee of all biennials since I joined the profession in 1975 but shall not be at the 1988 version for obvious reasons.

Peter E. Maskell

Lecturer, Department of Library and Information Studies,
Curtin University

Fitting the equivalent of two conferences into seven days certainly is a challenge, and has called for some new approaches to conference programming and participation.

The program for the LAA portion of the conference begins with a plenary session to introduce key themes, and delegates will then have the opportunity to take part in smaller group sessions on the themes of their choice. Response to the Program Committee's call for papers has been most encouraging, and we expect to be able to offer a wide and interesting range of sessions on current library and information issues.

The IFLA portion of the program can be outlined only at this stage. Topics and speakers are determined by IFLA Divisions, Sections and Round Tables, and this is a process which began at the Brighton IFLA conference in August. Information will be publicised as it becomes available.

Mr Maskell questions whether he will be getting value for money in the LAA Biennial Conference program. The fee covers more than three days of activities, and includes the opening and closing receptions, a hypothetical, a sound and light show and a major exhibition. Venues will include the Sydney Opera House and the new and newly renovated buildings of the State Library of NSW.

This is a unique opportunity to take part in an international conference, to meet and discuss issues with overseas colleagues, and to show them the developments that are taking place in library and information services in Australia. We hope you won't miss it.

Sue Phillips
Acting Director

Munn-Pitt revisited

Stephen Alomes, perhaps I missed your point and you missed mine. If your letter only concerns 3 periodicals in 2 public libraries then — you win. If on the other hand we move to the hundreds of periodicals not held by hundreds of Australian libraries and which we all ought to hold and not pretend that somehow the general dearth can be relieved by nice or minute distinctions of importance, however valid in the mere comparison, then your letter was bound to cause a response such as mine. To choose one title out of two required is close to the bounds of rationality, one choice out of ten isn't. (In the instances you mention there are further complicating factors as the periodicals you sight are within the Ryde subject specialisation holdings and are required to serve the Sydney region.)

The fact that you believe that rational choices can be made in 'difficult times' shows how out of touch you are, for we got no more support when times were good than now, and we could easily be supported to a satisfactory level regardless of 'tough economic times' such being the minuscule percentages of funds that public libraries are allotted (about 0.2 percent of State budgets and an average of 2 percent of Local Government budgets) and when we need only about 1 percent of State funds and 4 percent of Local Government funds to flourish.

We would have to retreat to the economic conditions of Nicaragua before cuts in public libraries could be seen to be justified.

Thus my contemptuous tone, hoping that some idea of the Munn-Pitt like state public libraries are descending into (and some never left it save for the superficial brightness of plastic jackets and Mills and Boon romances) hoping that the only people who can do anything about it, the educated, will notice. A large section of Australia but timid and apologetic; but who have higher priorities than concrete roads, satisfying New York and Tokyo bankers, new take-away networks and the tourist industry.

Julian Woods
Goulburn City Library

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EDITOR

Expressions of interest are invited from persons with appropriate qualifications and experience to take up the editorship of *Orana* in 1988.

Orana deals with children's literature and information services to young people through school and children's libraries. The journal should reflect current thinking on a wide range of issues and topics.

The editor must be able to work effectively with the Editorial Board and the production manager.

Proven communication skills are necessary and editorial experience is highly desirable.

The fee for this position is to be negotiated.

Submissions should be lodged by 4 December 1987. Further information is available from:

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