

How about some consultation?

AACOBS Standing Committee's decision to recommend charges for interlibrary loans from March 1987 is a reversal of earlier policy and has been made, as far as local government libraries are concerned, without consideration of the effect on basic information service in public libraries and without consultation either with individual public librarians, with their organisations, or with the State Public Library Departments.

The assumption that charges will not be passed on to the public is unrealistic and indicates a lack of appreciation of the current situation and problems of public libraries. In NSW the State Government contributes only 16.1% of the cost of maintaining public library services.

AACOBS, while confirming the policy of support for free public libraries has, in effect, suggested a charge on information which will inevitably lead to increases in user charges.

No research appears to have been done to establish the type of material borrowed by public libraries from university libraries. In Sydney these are the libraries of last resort, usually for out of print material. Co-operative schemes such as the Sydney Subject Specialisation/Joint Fiction Reserve have contributed to the supply of information to the general public in the form of interlibrary loans, to both city and country, to the extent of over 30,000 volumes in 1985. Many of these were for students.

I find it incomprehensible that some of the leaders of our profession have recommended the imposition of charges without considering the needs of the public who rely on local libraries as their point of access to the library network and who do not have access to other libraries.

It is essential that exemptions for public libraries from the proposed charges be considered.

Diana Oliver
Sutherland Shire Council

'Living there' as positive disincentive

I feel obliged to comment up on T.C. Lawton's letter (*InCite*, 21 Nov. p.14).

For those who didn't read the letter, this is one of those people who feel unable or unwilling to form opinions on South Africa because the facts can't be had until you've 'lived there' (for a 'considerable' time whatsmore!).

T.C. Lawton trots out the weary but insidious lie mythologised by too many imprecise, insensitive teacher historians that we in the lucky country have never known 'Civil strife'. It is very significant that there are a number of people who 'live here' who either haven't heard, don't believe or choose to forget that racist massacres (Buckland River 1857, Lambing Flat 1861), total genocide (Tasmanian Aboriginal population) and a government policy dictating violent dismembering of family units are amongst the irrefutable facts comprising our history. Indeed South African observers are amongst the first to point out the several similarities between the two countries, both in terms of situation and response.

As it happens, up until the most recent blanket of Information Department censorship, we have been seeing far more of life in Soweto and (what was) Crossroads than the whites in neighbouring Johannesburg and Capetown are ever likely to under the current regime. What reasons are there after all for the fact that until very recently a TV service just didn't exist in that country?

My opinion is that 'living there' operates as a positive disincentive to being aware of unpleasant but pertinent facts. I also think that when 'considerable' time is involved, this effect is enhanced. Lawton may well serve as a case in point.

In relation to Australian librarians, I'd be interested to learn from our official representatives what moves are afoot internationally re the South Africa issue and in particular, what has been the extent and direction of the LAA response.

Kate Lamb

More on ILL charges

I call attention to the proposal to charge cost-recovery rates for inter-library loans. This decision by the library of University of New South Wales apparently received endorsement by AACOBS Standing Committee.

The decision appears ill-considered

The situation which led to this cost-recovery scheme did not arise overnight, yet the scheme has been adopted and promoted in haste, without canvassing opinion among library colleagues.

A widespread and expensive study of ILL patterns has been supported by AACOBS, but its results have not been awaited. No specific relevant data is publicly available.

The promoter of the charges (UNSW) has not revealed any close research into:

- the ultimate origins of the burdensome ILL requests,
- the economic structure of the publicly funded inter-library system,
- alternatives to crude cost-recovery charges, or
- the principles underlying public funding of education and information in our democratic nation.

UNSW's abrupt action without public justification is especially disturbing from an academic library, whose chief chaired an enquiry into the subject of library service for the Australian public.

In short, the haste and the lack of public inquiry reflect very badly on AACOBS and the academic community.

'User pays' will be a costly principle for the academic and other net-lenders to up-hold

'Legal deposit' libraries could not ethically charge. If University of Sydney, the Parliamentary Library of New South Wales, the State Library of New South Wales, or the National Library attempt to introduce such charges, I will campaign for legislation to restrain them. Alternatively, I will seek to have them deprived of their 'deposit library' status and all legal deposit spoils. Let free local public libraries in the Subject Specialisation scheme receive the deposit copies.

If academic libraries pursue a consistent policy of cost-recovery from the user, they will (logically) support full-cost fees charged to students, and support charging academic staff and students an economic rent on the materials consulted and borrowed. (Or will the cut staff and stock budgets to a level of funding which they can raise by fees?)

Do the providers of public education (taxpayers and our governments) intend the library resources of any one institution to be the exclusive property of that institution? Is more recent or smaller institution to pay fees to the older and larger to share the community's property? If universities, etc, adopt that attitude, I would expect governments to shift their funding away from the old and large to equalise the opportunities of smaller 'clients' ... new colleges, state government departments, local government, business folk etc, even students.

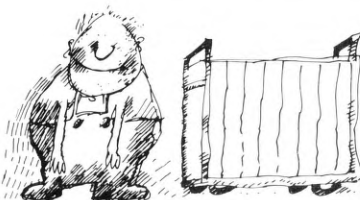
Why should every citizen pay taxes to provide a select few with academic libraries and tuition (and future professional profits) and then be charged again for borrowing by ILL the materials which those taxes provided? I am not anti-education, but I will oppose wealth-discrimination in access to publicly funded information and education.)

As a potential buyer of the ILL service (and a professional colleague), I would be interested to know how the 'real cost' was derived. Presumably these are averaged costs of section salaries and materials used, thereby including some academic/internal overhead. The 'price' issue is rather like medical fees - a schedule of recommended fees, suppliers do as they please, and users pay - but with no Medibank, Medicare, or social security concessions.

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LETTERS

More on ILL charges from page 6

A very large part of this library's ILL borrowing is for formal study purposes

Staff and students of the Riverina Murray Institute of Higher Education are heavy borrowers. University students enrolled with New England, Deakin, and New South Wales also use us because the universities do not meet their needs. Should we charge the students individually (distance discrimination) or bulk-bill the universities? The remainder of our requests include many from high school students, whose school libraries exist largely as a 'charity'. Whom shall we charge?

Public libraries are in no position to 'absorb' the proposed charges

Public Library funding in New South Wales is beyond crisis point . . . the library system is sinking and breaking up. Rate pegging, systematic reduction of New South Wales state funding, and unemployment affect all councils' budgeting. *In addition* rural recession, reversal of decentralisation, and a revival of conservatism have severely limited country library funding.

So, forget the double standards and the pious appeal. If the university cannot absorb the cost, public libraries also will be under extreme pressure to pass on any ILL charge to the citizen who requests the loan.

A personal note, as an experienced user

Over many years I have used and valued the whole fabric of public-funded library services: as a tertiary student (internal and external) over many years, as a parent with learning children, and as a citizen constantly involved in continuing my education in diverse fields. I believe that user-pays is the WRONG WAY — GO BACK.

Before librarians guide their libraries down the path of 'user pays', they should carefully and publicly consider all consequences of the ILL charges, the principles underlying such charges. AACOBs might also consider the implications of support for the hold-your-own and user-shall-pay attitudes.

These comments are offered constructively. Remember that I did not invent this 'real cost' ILL charge, nor am I responsible for its hasty endorsement.

C D Marshall,
Chief Librarian
Riverina Community Library Service

Note of protest

In view of a number of recent enquiries, I would like it to be known that I have not rejoined the LAA. Indeed, had I not resigned in 1984/85 (see *Australian Library Journal*, May, 1985), I would have had ample cause to do so since then.

To demonstrate my point, may I draw attention to a recent example of priority-setting in the LAA? It was able to find over \$10,000 to send various members of the hierarchy to IFLA in Tokyo yet could only find \$4,500 (out of a requested \$6,300) to fund a much-needed revision of the Public Library Input Standards.

It seems to me it is immaterial whether we have a LIAA or an ALIA — what we do need is a real alternative to the LAA!

M. Garlick

HERITAGE WEEK 1987 — full steam ahead!

It has been 10 years since the first Heritage Week was held in Victoria. Since then it has become a national week involving people of all ages right throughout Australia.

As a major annual event Heritage Week is an unsurpassed opportunity to heighten community awareness of those aspects of the past that are worthy of preservation: historic buildings and sites, areas of scientific significance and natural beauty, historic gardens, archaeological, agricultural and industrial areas, cultural traditions, historic events and human achievements.

In Victoria the theme for Heritage Week will be 'Victoria — a golden history' and activities are planned to centre around the impact that gold together with the influx of population and the increase in wealth had on the state.

In Victoria this year's annual steam train trip will be to the Loch Ard Gorge. One train will run from Melbourne and another from Ballarat connecting at Geelong. Barwon Park, a 42-roomed mansion built in 1869 will be visited along the way. On arriving at the Gorge, Andrew Lemon and Marjorie Morgan, authors of *Poor Souls they perished: the Cataragui Australia's worst shipwreck* will describe some of the perils encountered by the early immigrants to the colony.

During 4-5 April the Villa Alba will be open. The Villa Alba in Kew is notable for its elaborate interiors. Tradesmen will be performing building and decorating crafts and suppliers of restoration materials and hardware will also be on hand.

As a part of the NSW Heritage Week festivities Richmond Villa, home of the Society of Australian Genealogists will be open for visitors to find out just how easy it is to trace their family history. The open day will be on

12 April from 11.00am to 4.00pm at Richmond Villa which is located at 120 Kent Street, Sydney.

This year's Hunter Steamfest will be bigger than ever with more trains steaming into the district during 11-12 April. The social highlight of the weekend will be the Steamfest Ball on Saturday night.

Sunday 12 April will see the second Parramatta Vintage Car Rally starting from the Rocks and ending at Parramatta Park in the midst of the city's Colonial Day festivities.

Recently restored heritage will be on view at the Regency villa, Tusculum, located at 3 Manning Street, Potts Point. Designed by John Verge, the famous colonial architect responsible for Elizabeth Bay House, Tusculum will be open to the public on Saturday 11 April from 10.00am to 4.00pm. Architects from the Historic Buildings and Sites Committee of the Royal Institute of Architects NSW Chapter will conduct tours of the villa and provide information and advice on restoration problems.

What better time for the Heritage Council to blow its own horn! A new exhibition detailing the habitats of rare and endangered plants and animals, geological sites, bushland remnants in urban areas, historic landscapes, gardens and cemeteries will open at the Hyde Park Barracks from 3 April. 'Rarely regarded: the natural heritage of NSW' will feature little known aspects of the Heritage Council's work in conserving the natural environment or landscapes modified by human activity. Admission to the exhibition will be free.

Further information on Heritage events in NSW is available from the NSW Heritage Week Office (02) 27 1913. For information on Victorian events call (03) 654 4711.

Librarian's 'tail'

Wandering around Port Macquarie over the Christmas period, I did the usual holiday-maker thing and opted for an evening's entertainment at the local cinema. As is generally the case in holiday periods, the choice of films was limited to those of widest general public appeal. Alone, I would not have bothered to stay, but my other 'half' expressed a desire to see the new Hollywood discovery — Eddie Murphy in the film 'The Golden Child'.

The storyline was a simple one — a perfect child is stolen from a Tibetan monastery and brought to New York by the forces of evil. Eddie Murphy is the 'chosen one' to rescue him. The film had all the ingredients for the

widest public appeal — black American private eye hero, beautiful Chinese co-star, a child, an animal (parrot), karate, excitement, the supernatural, humour, contrasting scenes of city and Tibet — all of which had made it a number one box office draw. However, the highlight of the film for me, was the depiction of the 'librarian'.

Hidden down in the cellar areas beneath a Chinese herbal shop in New York, the 'librarian' acted as a sort of 'oracle' of knowledge on ancient Chinese manuscripts. Visitors asked a question and were *told* the answer (as a true professional).

The curvaceous shape of the 'librarian', apparent behind the flimsy screen, however, caused the hero to ask her for a date and comment on her 'unnatural' solitary habits. The explanation that the 'librarian' was 300 years old (because she had been fathered by a dragon) was pooh-poohed, but when the screen was dislodged the 'tail' revealed the truth.

Given all the problems of the librarians public image, this was certainly one up on the buns and specs line — although, the 'tail' is a bit of a worry!

Carol Cotton

