

By any other name — ACLIS

Recently a new acronym, ACLIS, was added to the many for which librarians appear to have a predilection. ACLIS, the Australian Council of Libraries and Information Services succeeds AACOBS, the Australian Advisory Committee on Bibliographical Services, and ALIC, the Australian Libraries and Information Council.

Called by whatever name these bodies, and others such as CAUL, the Committee of Australian University Librarians, the State Librarians Council, or more local bodies such as MINTERLIB, the Municipal Interlibrary Committee in Victoria, or OLC, the Office of Library Co-operation in New South Wales, these organisations represent a distinguishing characteristic of libraries, that none is self-sufficient and all have much to gain from co-operation. Indeed one can go further and state that all depend on co-operation.

Although there is no formal national library system in Australia there is an informal network which attempts to draw on the strengths of particular libraries. This informal network is destabilised and weakened when significant individual component libraries are compelled to change in ways which affect the network, such as budgetary restrictions which cause libraries to cancel unique subscriptions or organisational changes to the body of which the library is a department which prevent that library from playing its former role.

ACLIS and the other co-operative bodies mentioned consist of groups of libraries, not of individual personal members. In this they differ from organisations such as the LAA whose primary purpose is to service the professional interests of individuals. There are, of course, some areas of overlap but, as a general rule, ACLIS and the other bodies representing libraries are concerned with matters which affect libraries and their parent organisations as institutions.

AACOBS, the Australian Advisory Council on Bibliographical Services, was established in 1956 with a membership limited to the then Commonwealth National Library, the Public Libraries (as the State Libraries were then

known), the State Library Boards (representing what are now called public libraries), and representatives from the universities, CSIRO and the LAA. As its name implied it was principally interested in bibliography in the sense of creating a national bibliography of Australian publications, and in creating a national union catalogue of monograph holdings in Australia's major libraries. It also encouraged the creation of a union list of periodicals in humanities and social science to supplement the already existing Union List of Scientific Serials compiled by CSIRO.

Creation of these tools was essential if the interlibrary loan network was to function effectively. While their creation was a co-operative venture, much of the execution was carried out by the National Library.

Membership of AACOBS was gradually extended, first to all university libraries and subsequently to representatives of other kinds of libraries. Attention also turned from listing of resources to the resources themselves. The 1960s was a decade of activity in this regard, commencing with AACOBS' and the National Library's sponsorship of Professor Maurice Tauber's *Resources of Australian Libraries* and leading on to the work of AACOBS' Book Resources Committee which surveyed Australia's needs in more detail and made recommendations for their improvement. Although the actual recommendations were seldom themselves implemented, the reports were quoted by the then Australian Universities Commission and the Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education in Australia and undoubtedly influenced attitudes to library provision in higher education.

A by-product of the emphasis on resources was the setting up of the state Book Resources Committees which were intended to co-ordinate resource development at state level. These eventually became the AACOBS State and Territory Committees acting as the focus for co-operation between libraries of all kinds at that level.

While retaining its interest in bibliography

and book resources AACOBS in the 70s responded to the growing emphasis on services. It attempted to gain federal support for public libraries. It responded to grandiose plans for a national library system. It interested itself in the developing MEDLARS and AUSINET computer-based information services, the Freedom of Information debate and the need for changes to copyright legislation. It wrestled with National Information Policy issues and kept interest alive in the new austere climate after 1975.

Declining support from a National Library beset with its own budget problems brought a new constitution in 1981 based on fee-paying membership. For 20 years AACOBS' activities had been financed informally through the voluntary support of the National Library and the large member libraries of AACOBS. In the later 70s these had also paid formal subscriptions. The new constitution required all members to pay fees at a differential rate depending on library expenditure. Few members realise, however, that the contribution to AACOBS' expenditure from fees right up until 1987 never exceeded \$36,000.

In the 1980s AACOBS continued to be a channel for library co-operation at national and local levels. By this time it was financing approved R and D and bibliography projects. It was the vehicle for the debate on charging for interlibrary loans, National Information Policy, Serials Collection Policy and other major questions.

Some librarians held the view that libraries required a more formal channel to government either through recognition of AACOBS by government or by the creation of a body for that purpose. This channel appeared to have been created when ALIC, the Australian Libraries and Information Council, was set up in 1981. ALIC reported to the Cultural Ministers Council along with other cultural institutions such as museums and art galleries. ALIC itself consisted of the chief officers of the National Library, Australian Archives and the State and Territory Libraries, and representatives of the Commonwealth Ministers for Education and Science.

ALIC was set up by government on the understanding that it would not be given a special budget. It was consequently not unlike AACOBS in this respect, dependent on the voluntary contributions of its members. In fact they contributed money and staff time to several projects of which possibly the best known are the work of the Conservation Committee, of the Working Party on the Preservation of Electronic Records and on the Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea Copying Project.

Some librarians saw the restricted membership of ALIC as a weakness and the pressures which developed to widen membership were not unlike those to which AACOBS responded in the 70s. Moreover the interface with the Cultural Ministers Council did not prove particularly appropriate. It appeared to disregard library services to commerce, science and technology. Ministers on the Cultural Ministers Council had no responsibility for libraries in some areas; some were not responsible for any libraries at all.

Considerable overlap was seen between the interests and activities of ALIC and AACOBS, the principal difference being the restricted membership of ALIC. When the Cultural Ministers Council asked ALIC to review itself it was decided that the relationship with AACOBS should be further explored. It was from these explorations, conducted by representatives of both bodies, that ACLIS has emerged.

ACLIS came into existence formally by the election of state and territory representatives

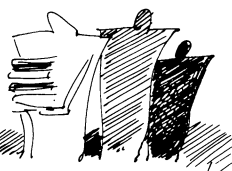
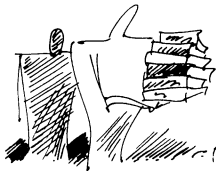


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cont'd from page 10

by AACOBS and ALIC members to an interim national council which had its first meeting, chaired by the Director-General, on 26 February 1988. That meeting co-opted four more members from constituencies not already represented. The interim National Council met again on 9 April. A principal task of the interim National Council, whose term expires on 30 September 1988, is to prepare a formal constitution and arrange for elections to a new National Council. However it is also picking up ongoing projects from ALIC and AACOBS and the latter has made part of its remaining funds available to ACLIS. Until ACLIS has been fully established all present AACOBS and ALIC members are regarded as members of ALIC. Arrangements are in hand for a vote of AACOBS members to wind up that organisation.

A prominent theme in the discussions leading up to ACLIS has been the need for the library community to have a higher profile nationally and regionally. To assist towards this objective the National Library is supporting a senior appointment of Executive Officer for at least three years as well as providing secretarial support. It is assumed that the AACOBS structure of Working Parties and State/Territory Committees will continue though probably in modified form. Membership, which will be by subscription, will be open to a similar range of bodies as was eligible to join AACOBS. ACLIS, however, will not claim formally to represent archives; it recognizes that this is the function of the Australian Council of Archives.

In addition to getting itself established and continuing the projects taken over from AACOBS and ALIC, ACLIS intends to: emphasize the significant contribution which libraries can make to economic recovery and the Government's educational goals; ensure that libraries have policies and services which contribute to economic recovery; interact with the Summit Steering Committee; support efforts to develop information policies at state level and to identify the essential elements of a national information system; identify issues as they emerge and develop position statements and select suitable channels for publicizing them; place special emphasis on research and development; develop working relationships with organizations with related interests.

The high profile and more pro-active stance which ACLIS has been established to assume will require the support of the community of libraries throughout Australia. If ACLIS is to be successful it will need resources far beyond the \$36,000 or so which was subscribed to AACOBS by its members. The National Library has offered strong support to launch ACLIS but cannot be expected to continue to do so without tangible evidence that other libraries consider ACLIS of sufficient importance to warrant substantial support.

Libraries have a high degree of mutual interdependence and ACLIS is the vehicle for co-operation among all libraries at national and local levels. Its success will enrich the information resources and services available to the Australian community.

Derek Fielding

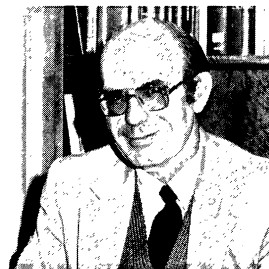
President, ACLIS Interim National Council

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the Victorian Branch in 1974, and Secretary of the LAA Biennial Conference Committee for the 1975 Melbourne conference.

Michael Ramsden is a strong advocate of continuing education. He has conducted regular indexing programs for the Australian Society of Indexers, PRECIS workshops for RMIT, and two series of travelling workshops for the LAA on the new edition of AACR which were held in all capital cities and Townsville in 1979.

Michael Ramsden has been very active in the area of course development and course design, and led major course redesigns at RMIT, including the early introduction of computer familiarisation subjects. Since 1984 he has been heavily involved in utilising information management software packages in both teaching and research programs. He has always been very generous in giving his time and expertise to others in the interests of furthering the development of librarianship and in education for library and information



Michael Ramsden — 'a distinguished contribution to the theory and practice of librarianship'.

studies in particular.

Fellowship of the Library Association of Australia will be conferred on Michael Ramsden at a function to be hosted by the Victorian Branch at RMIT on 6 July. The H.C.L. Anderson Award will be presented to Warren Horton during the IFLA/LAA conference. The Redmond Barry Award will be presented to Marcie Muir in Adelaide in November, in conjunction with the meeting of General Council.

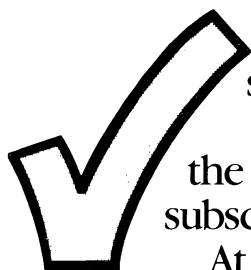
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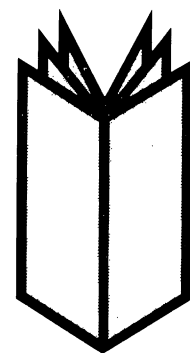


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