



Who needs friends?

Christine Henderson's guest editorial (*APLIS* 1 (1) April 1988) concerning the plight of Australia's public libraries, valiantly tries to give focus to a direction for public librarians to follow in order that they get themselves off the bottom rung of the ladder in local authority hierarchies. We are all experiencing a funding crisis and it seems like a pretty good idea for librarians to accelerate the marketing of themselves and the vast resources of information for which they are custodian, to the group who can do most in stopping the rot, ie our immediate employers.

I applaud the editorial's strong support for the principle of the free flow of information and quick efficient access to it as being necessary to the healthy growth of democratic societies. I agree also that one of the best ways to accomplish such a fundamental objective is to demonstrate to councillors and administrators, the people who work out budget priorities, the essential contribution to effective decision making that their own library can make.

A competent reference librarian should have no trouble at all in doing this. In fact he will probably create too much work for himself given the chronic understaffing he no doubt will be suffering, and therefore will contribute to a general backlog for which his chief librarian might be tempted to seek solace if she reads *InCite*, in the 'great reservoir of goodwill' of the 'Friends of the Library' movement.

Unclear as to what exactly such a broad grouping means, it does, however, carry the connotation of volunteer labour and wouldn't it be nice to get that mounting pile of books covered, and the load of shelving etc. off the backs of her staff. The chief librarian might be tempted to consider this course of action because years of brow beating at the hands of ignorant and sometimes hostile councils will have blunted her determination to think anything can be gained by fighting for decent funding and satisfactory levels of professional staffing.

While agreeing wholeheartedly that 'we must motivate our users to support us financially and politically' I find myself in total disagreement with Christine Henderson's proclamation that 'friends groups must be established in every library across Australia' as the way to do it. Why must they be? Why do we librarians need any one else to carry the load of library advocacy for us? Are we so weak a profession that we need to rely upon a group of well-intentioned amateurs with time on their hands to push our case for us in high places?

I am of the opinion that 'the great reservoir of goodwill' that Alan Bundy speaks of in his Frontline comment (*InCite* 4 March 1988) resides in the whole community and can be mobilised in public libraries' favour simply by librarians doing their jobs and delivering the goods. Indeed I believe it is quite enough to say 'I know my community well... I know my users' especially when I see consistently high and increasing levels of lending, and the frequent seeking of our advice from all sections of the community from drama groups, reading

clubs and local history societies to chamber of commerce and local fruit growers. Having to worry about setting up a cumbersome and time consuming friends group and then direct it, simply has the effect of dispersing and diluting the finite energy of busy professionals.

At a time when librarians should be reaping the benefits of nearly two decades of hard work in library promotion and a subsequent gaining of acceptance for the profession in most quarters, Christine Henderson and her newly won over advocate, Alan Bundy, seem quite willing to throw away this hard won credibility and status and abrogate public librarians' responsibilities to an amorphous fringe group of possibly very nice people, but who know nothing about libraries.

Richard C. Yeates
Mobile Reference Librarian
Noosa Shire Library Service

Entrepreneurial investments

Don Schauder suggests that public librarians have missed the boat by failing to provide popular video libraries on a charging basis in order to strengthen their credibility with funding authorities (*InCite* 27 May 1988).

The provision of a popular video library aimed at profit-making would require a sizable investment of ratepayers' contributions by a Council. Expert advisers view video libraries as a highly competitive and risky business investment. Most ratepayers would be outraged if Councils were to invest their rate contributions in risky business enterprises of this nature.

Don Schauder's assumption that additional income from entrepreneurial activities would strengthen the financial position of public libraries is highly questionable. For instance, the British Library, which earned 25 percent of what it spent in 1986/87 generates more revenue than any other library in the world. However, it has lost close to 5 million pounds in grant. The BL's Chief Executive stated in the 1986/87 Annual Report: '... after seven years of the grant-in-aid falling short... there is a narrowing margin between the resilience of the staff, their appetite for enterprise... and the weight of the work...'

There is also a real danger that entrepreneurial enterprises by public libraries may result in resources being reallocated from existing services to those services which generate income, regardless of the relative value of such services to the local community in terms of information, education, culture and recreation.

Tim Bruwer
Brunswick Public Library

Support the Young Ones

In reply to Jean Bailey's letter 'Paraprofessionals Excluded' (*InCite* (29 April, 1988) the NSW Branch wishes to clarify the intentions behind the establishment of a group, originally called (rather facetiously) the NSW Young Upward Professional Library Information Specialist, or YUPLIS. The title was temporary, in the absence of brainwaves on a more fun (or even grammatically correct) title or acronym. We later found the title 'The Young Ones' which I may say is also the subject of some mirth at Branch Council ('Why can't I join in - I'm young at heart...?', 'I hope there were no over 30's admitted to that Young One's dinner?', and so on).

Regardless of the mirth, the aim of the group is a serious one: to target potential members among the new recruits to careers in libraries. Ms Bailey will be pleased to know, nonetheless, I am sure, that a library technician has already joined the committee which

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Library Association of Australia ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 49th Annual General Meeting of the Library Association of Australia will be held at the University of New South Wales, in Sydney on Saturday, 27 August 1988.

AGENDA

1. Notice of convening meeting
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of the 1987 AGM
4. Presentation of 1987 Annual Report and Balance Sheet, and Income and Expenditure Account
5. Presentation of supplementary Balance Sheet and supplementary Income and Expenditure Account to 31 July 1988
6. Appointment of auditors
7. Presentation of Awards
8. General business (see 3 below).

NOTICES OF MOTION

1. That the LAA biennial conference become an annual conference.
A. Edwards
2. That the location of biennial conferences no longer be determined by rotation through states, and that Branches, Regional Groups or other Divisions be invited to bid for them.
K. Webb

RULES OF MEETING

1. All motions to be put to the AGM must appear in this published agenda.
2. The only terms that may be raised under General Business are those of an informal nature, or those that are within the scope of the business already laid down. Motions of a substantial nature relating to items not covered in the notice of the meeting will not be allowed.
3. If an item of urgency arises which is not within the business of the meeting the Chairperson has the power to accept it without notice, or rule that due notice must be given.
4. All motions additional to those on the printed agenda and in accordance with 3 above, and amendments, shall be written in triplicate and signed by the movers (forms will be provided), one copy to be delivered to the Chair, the second to the projectionist, the third to the mover.
5. When addressing the Chair, the person desiring recognition will properly identify themselves, giving their name and library. Only LAA members may speak.
6. Debate shall be limited to three minutes for each speaker, no speaker may have the floor twice on the same question until all who wish to speak have spoken.
7. Proxies. To be valid, proxies must be in the form set out in By-law 15 and in the hands of the General Secretary, Ms Anne Harris, at the LAA office, 376 Jones St, Ultimo 2007, by 24 August 1988. Proxy forms must not specify how the holder of the proxy is to vote on specific issues.
8. By general consent, if there be no objection, or by a two-thirds vote, any rule governing the debate may be suspended.
9. The Chairperson's rulings on procedural matters may not be debated. The reference for rules and their interpretation by the Parliamentarian will be Joske's *The law and procedure at meetings in Australia and New Zealand*, 7th ed., 1982. A Parliamentarian will be appointed to advise the Chairperson on procedures and to assist in determining the results of a poll of members present if necessary.



Keep the 'Vital' in your Vital Link

Listed below are changes in addresses and new telephone numbers for the *Vital Link* — Keep your copy vital by noting down the changes now.

• **LAA Past President**, Peter Dawe, can now be reached at 42 View Street, Mont Albert VIC 3127 (03) 898 2418.

• **LAA General Treasurer**, Alex Cutts, has changed his postal address to c/- State RMC for TAFE, PO Box 3, South Brisbane Qld 4101.

• **Northern Areas Regional Group (TAS)**, President's (Robyn McKenzie) phone number (003) 44 9866.

• **North West Regional Group (WA)**, New office bearers are:

President: Mr Paul Vandermade, c/- Hedland College Library, PMB 1, South Hedland (091) 72 2144.

Secretary: Ms Lee-Anne Shields, c/- The Library, Mt Newman Mining Company Ltd, PO Box 231, Port Hedland WA 6721 (091) 73 6591.

Treasurer: Mrs Janine Boyle, c/- South Hedland Public Library, PO Box 2361, South Hedland WA 6722 (091) 72 1542.

• **Education for Librarianship Section (NSW Group)**. Office bearers for this new group are the same as for the National Section — James Henri, *President*; Gary Gorman, *Secretary*; Marsha Reilly, *Treasurer*.

• **Literacy Section**: new office bearers are: *President*: Ms Sophie Athan, c/- Northcote City Library, 32-38 Separation Street, Northcote VIC 3070 (03) 481 9425.

Secretary: Ms Eve Stocker, c/- Northcote City Library, 32-38 Separation Street, Northcote VIC 3070 (03) 481 9425.

Treasurer: Mr George Eraclides, c/- Northcote City Library, 32-38 Separation Street, Northcote VIC 3070 (03) 481 425.

• **Local Studies Section, SA Group** (new group):

President: Ms Ruth Grgurich, c/- Noarlunga Public Library, PO Box 411, Noarlunga Centre SA 5168 (08) 384 0510.

Secretary: Ms Jo Ryan, c/- Enfield Public Library, Kensington Crescent, Enfield SA 5085 (08) 349 5370.

Treasurer: Ms Gillian Pearson, c/- Munno Para Public Library, Warooka Crescent, Smithfield SA 5114 (08) 254 6184.

• **School Libraries Section, (NSW Group)**

Secretary: Niki Kallenberger, has moved. Now at Library Services, 35 Mitchell Street, North Sydney NSW 2060 (02) 925 8154.

Treasurer: Robina Weir, c/- Wattle Park Teachers Centre, 424 Kensington Road, Wattle Park SA 5066 (08) 322 4555.

• **Special Libraries Section (National)**: *President*, Lynne Carmicheal, has moved. She can now be contacted c/- Australian Submarine Corporation, PO Box 2474, Adelaide SA 5001 (08) 348 7100.

Australian Special Libraries News

John Thawley, *Editor*, can now be contacted via Swinburne Library Information Technology Services, PO Box 218, Hawthorn VIC 3122 (03) 819 8231.

is developing a program which caters to the new generation in the Association.

In this regard, the NSW Branch looks forward to a positive reaction to the initiative of its younger members encouraging membership among those at the early stages of their careers. Come on, technicians, join the fun, support the Young Ones!

Mairead Browne,
NSW Branch President.

Standards vs diminishing budgets

Please, Mr President don't knock libraries before you check your facts. Alan Bundy (*InCite* 16 April 1988) raises the question of fines in public libraries and the need to provide better access for the public by opening on Saturday afternoons and Sundays. He is quite right that fines may cause negative feelings about the library service — but you must be realistic — at some point there needs to be some effective means of getting loans back — otherwise reserve systems will be ineffective. Unlike colleges or universities where students' exam results can be withheld etc... the public library has no such means at its disposal.

The experience at Sutherland (over 1.5m loans per year) will illustrate my point. Adults are not fined until books are six weeks overdue. In an effort to save postage costs last year we cut out one of the two notices to users, prior to their receiving the 'final letter' which is followed by legal action. Despite a campaign over several months there was a large rise in the number of notices to be sent — people wait to get them, then return just before the fine is due.

Costs of recovery and costs of replacement must be considered — it is unrealistic not to do so. I agree that methods of levying fines need examining. Sutherland's practice is reasonably generous — there is an extended loan period, and loans can be renewed (if not reserved). Without follow — up it would be impossible to trace users who leave addresses. Hopefully the above will supply some of the answers to Alan's question 'why fine at all'. I would be interested to hear about alternatives for a large service.

And now on to weekend opening of public libraries. It makes me mad to have the President of the LAA making comments such as 'It does not suffice to ring hands and blame Council reluctance'... On what state does he base his remarks? Not NSW where many Chief Librarians have battled for extended hours — it took us four years at Sutherland. Has the President considered what it is like trying to maintain reasonable standards of service on budgets diminishing in real terms, with staff ceilings and with local authorities affected by rate pegging and restrictions on loan raising, looking for anything on which charges can be made.

I'm all for stirring — I do some myself — but is it fair to focus on public libraries only when considering access at weekends? What about the TAFE libraries and college libraries whose hours are inadequate?

There are many factors affecting weekend opening — the major ones being current award conditions and abysmal funding.

Diana Oliver
Sutherland Shire Libraries
and Information Service.

OUTLOOK

Public libraries — the British Minister for the Arts and Libraries, Richard Luce, has announced funding for a study of performance measures for public libraries. The result of the study, to be completed by August, will be a manual which will provide a range of performance indicators from which local authorities (councils) can select and adapt those appropriate for local needs and situations.

Mr Luce has also presented a Green Paper titled 'Financing our public library services: four subjects for debate'. Although it states that local authorities would not have to introduce charges, it suggests services for which charges could be made or contracted out. It also attempts to define the basic service which would continue to be free. A summary of the Green Paper was issued as a supplement to the March 1988 issue of *Library Association Record*.

• Authors in the United States are still waiting for Congress to take action on Public Lending Right legislation. Bills which would enable PLR to be enacted were introduced in the 98th and 99th Congresses, but no action followed. The chief proponent has retired from Congress and no one else has taken up the issue. Countries which already have PLR programs are Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Israel, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and West Germany. Belgium is likely to become the thirteenth country with PLR.

Networks — Four libraries in Colorado, all Dynix users, have received an LSCA grant to develop an online interface which will link them with seven library systems in the IRVING library network. When this link is

complete, libraries using Dynix, CLSI, Eyring, Carl and Pueblo vendor systems will be able to communicate. There will be almost 4 million items in the combined systems.

• The Universities of Cambridge, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds, London, Manchester and Oxford, which form the Consortium of University Research Libraries (CURL) have received a grant from the University Grants Committee to enable them to upgrade hardware and software in order to establish a Consortium database with a central joint index at the University of Manchester. The seven libraries are at different states of development for automation, but already more than 1.5 million records are in machine readable form. The database will eventually be accessible through the Joint Academic Network (JANET) which links computer installations in universities, polytechnics and other institutions in the United Kingdom.

Disasters — On 14 February the library of the Soviet National Academy of Sciences in Leningrad suffered a serious fire. The library was founded by Peter the Great with 1400 books in 1714 and the collection had grown to 17.5 million volumes. The Tsar's books survived the fire, but 400,000 volumes were destroyed, 3.6 million volumes were damaged by water, 10,000 volumes were affected by mould and 7.5 million volumes need some treatment. The fire burnt for 19 hours and 15,000 volunteers worked to clean up the aftermath.

Jennifer Redding

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