

WHAT THEY SAID



The Governor General

The following address was made by His Excellency the Right Honourable Sir Ninian Stephen, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia on the occasion of the opening of the 54th Conference of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions on Tuesday, 30 August at the Sydney Opera House.

We Australians consider it both a pleasure and a privilege that Australia should have been selected as the place of meeting of this conference of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions. A pleasure because all the literate world loves a library, and I've no reason to suppose that does not extend to librarians; a privilege because this conference brings to Australia so many leaders in the world of libraries and from all over the world. All Australian librarians, and indeed, all Australians welcome you and hope that you are able, after this conference, to stay a little while to meet more Australians and see more of this rather remote continent of ours. Be sure that you will be made welcome wherever you go.

One of the not wholly anticipated benefits of our bicentenary has been that it has brought to Australia, through conferences, congresses and symposia like this conference, a wealth of experts in so many fields, each of whom, in formal discussion and informal contacts, leaves behind lasting impressions which enrich our Australian community. These are real, working examples of that rather overworked phrase 'cultural exchange'.

And there is, of course, no profession more familiar with the concept of cultural exchange than librarians. You are the recipients and custodians of the accumulated information, knowledge and wisdom of the world, that accumulation which, in the aggregate, constitutes our whole body of culture, and at the same time you are the disseminators of it. Libraries world wide are the culture exchangers of mankind.

Ironically, the true worth of libraries can perhaps best be measured by the attention paid to them by their enemies, the tyrant rulers of all descriptions who, when they come to power, knowing that their greatest danger lies in the free expression and communication of ideas, make libraries and their contents a prime target of repression and restriction. Perhaps not a bad test of the freedom of a people lies in the state of their libraries and in the contents of their shelves.

In Australia, especially in this bicentennial year, we are somewhat given, I think, to emphatic self-criticism of our past and our present, our institutions and our aims, which is in itself no bad thing so long as it leads to constructive change and to reform. But at least in the case of freedom of access to our public libraries, and freedom for those libraries to keep on their shelves all that is available, we have little to reproach ourselves, except perhaps that funding for libraries, like funding for so many other good things, is always a problem. I wonder if there has ever been a librarian who has said to government, 'Stop, you are being too generous'. Certainly not in Australia, and



And there is, of course, no profession more familiar with the concept of cultural exchange than librarians.

most certainly not at the present time.

I have the impression that, in my lifetime, there has been a revolution in librarianship; that it happened perhaps some 35 or 40 years ago. In my youth librarians appeared as dark, suspicion-laden characters who unwillingly doled out their precious wares to unworthy readers, who were all regarded as potential book thieves or, at best, confirmed scribblers on and defacers of their books. It was a minor triumph to negotiate a loan of one of *their* books, something librarians only agreed to in the hope that it would be returned overdue, with fines to be extorted in consequence.

How it all seems to have changed. Librarians today positively welcome readers to their libraries, unless I suspect, they prove to be one of that grim army of insatiable genealogists in search of a family tree. Librarians actively encourage the use of their books and are endlessly patient in their help and advice.

But I wonder if perhaps the revolution was rather in me and not in librarians, perhaps 40 or more years ago I indeed was, or at least seemed to be, an inveterate turner down of corners of pages, a fiend for making notes in the margin of borrowed books and I wonder whether librarians were simply good judges of appearances. At all events, whichever side has reformed, what a welcome transformation it has been, culminating in today being able to address this great gathering of librarians without the uneasy sense that my briefcase will be searched for programs as I leave the Opera House.

May I repeat what an honour it is for Australia that the librarians of the world should have chosen Australia as their place of meeting in 1988. I have seen the timetable that the organisers have set you for the next few days and

this conference promises to be as mentally and physically demanding as it will be intellectually rewarding. I have no doubt that for Australian librarians it will be a long-remembered professional landmark, a stimulating professional experience. I hope that it will also be long and favourably remembered by our overseas guests.

I now formally declare open this 54th Conference of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions.

Hans-Peter Geh

The Civic Reception held at noon on Thursday, 1 September 1988 was hosted at the Sydney Town Hall by Sir Eric Neal, Chief Commissioner of the City of Sydney. After a welcoming speech by Sir Eric Neal, in which he paid tribute to libraries in providing rapid and accurate information for business and industry, Hans Peter-Geh, IFLA President, made the following reply:

Walking along Macquarie Street, I paid a visit to the monument of Captain Arthur Phillip, the commander of the historical 'First Fleet' and the first Governor of NSW. The reason I did this was because Arthur Phillip and I have something in common. Arthur Phillip's father - a teacher of languages - and I were born in Frankfurt and it is likely that Arthur Phillip also spoke German. So I feel quite at home in Sydney.

A wise man once said: 'The whole of human experience demonstrates over and over that no man is an island and neither is a library'. Therefore not only is a close co-operation of libraries within and across national borders a necessity - and this is the objective of our IFLA organisation - but also social events such as this for the communication between people,

Being here together for a reception at noon-time, I am reminded of a quotation by Boswell who noted in his *Life of Dr Johnson*, 'a luncheon lubricates business'.

Well we have been very busy during the last few days and will be busy in the days to come.

But librarians are also engaged in big business and that means money. I have read that here in Sydney people ask you now and then, 'How much money do you earn?'. We librarians, therefore, from all parts of the world have come to this city with great expectations with regard to collecting money for our libraries and to make the best use of it. And there is also an animal in this country which can serve as a good example when money is scarce - the kangaroo is the animal that makes big jumps with an empty pouch.

As many of us have an empty stomach, I should like to conclude by thanking our hosts very much on behalf of the LAA and IFLA, the International Federation of Lovers of Australia.