

THUMBS DOWN FOR NEW SLV

A decision has at last been made on the State Library of Victoria. And the decision is to refurbish. The Victorian State Government proposes to look for commercial buyers interested in developing the Queen Victoria Hospital site complete with a new museum complex. The library is to take over the vacated museum area. The Victorian State Minister for the Arts, Mr Cathie, announced the proposal on 17 February. The state government will contribute \$100 million to the project which may cost \$300 million. Mr Cathie said demolition of the Queen Victoria Hospital excluding the historic towers, trees and fences, would start soon and that redevelopment could begin this year with completion taking place in about five years.

Library short-changed

Reaction to the decision has been swift. Letters from Jan Smark Nilsson, Executive Director, the Braille and Talking Book Library, and Mr Axel Lodewycks, former Melbourne University Librarian, were featured prominently on the letters page of the *Age*, 18 February, under the headline 'We have been short-changed by decision on State Library'. Both correspondents communicated their disappointment and outrage. Ms. Smark Nilsson commented 'Although the building has character, the shape is non-functional and wasteful, and no amount of recycling can make it otherwise. For the state government to short-change Victorians in this manner when the Arts Centre and the National Tennis Centre have been built is indefensible'.

Axel Lodewycks in his letter pointed out that the Victorian State Government legislated for 'a new functional building' on the Queen Victoria Hospital site in 1983. Even though the library is the legal occupier of the site it will languish in archaic accommodation condemned by the Library Council of Victoria in 1970 as unworkable and unadaptable to modern requirements. 'Inevitably ineffective attempts to modernise this accommodation would be an irresponsible waste of public funds. The addition of similarly unadaptable buildings designed for exhibition purposes and discarded by the museum can only exacerbate the library's problems'.

One man crusade

Axel Lodewycks, a forthright advocate for libraries and their vital role in society, has been taking the SLV's problems to the mass media. He recently communicated his concerns about the SLV situation and the problems associated with the general lack of government funding in an article published in the *Age*, 5 February. The article is reprinted below.

The recent achievement by Victoria of what has been designated 'the best tennis centre in the world, together with other lavish sporting and entertainment facilities has thrown into even starker contrast the inexplicable neglect

of our public libraries.

Of these, our most indispensable information centre, the State Library of Victoria, has formidable problems exemplified by wholly inadequate, archaic and unadaptable 19th century accommodation, which prevents such essential developments as a cost-effective organisation of the library's many services and facilities and the installation of environmental controls to arrest the threatened disintegration of its material resources.

The British Library in London, at present housed, like the SLV, with a complex of museum buildings, is programmed to move next year to a new, functionally designed building, for which the British Government has initially appropriated £74 million (\$A160 million). Likewise, every Australian state except Victoria has already rehoused its state library in modern accommodation. The State Library of New South Wales is now moving its main facilities into a new \$42 million extension of its mid-20th century building.

As to running costs, the Australian Government was able to contribute \$15 million towards the staging of the Commonwealth Games in Brisbane for a few days in 1981. In the same year, it allocated \$17 million towards the maintenance of libraries Australia-wide for the whole of the year.

The role of libraries throughout the world embraces, in fact, the organisation and exploitation of the sum of recorded knowledge for all the purposes and for the unlimited benefit of practically every constructive human activity.

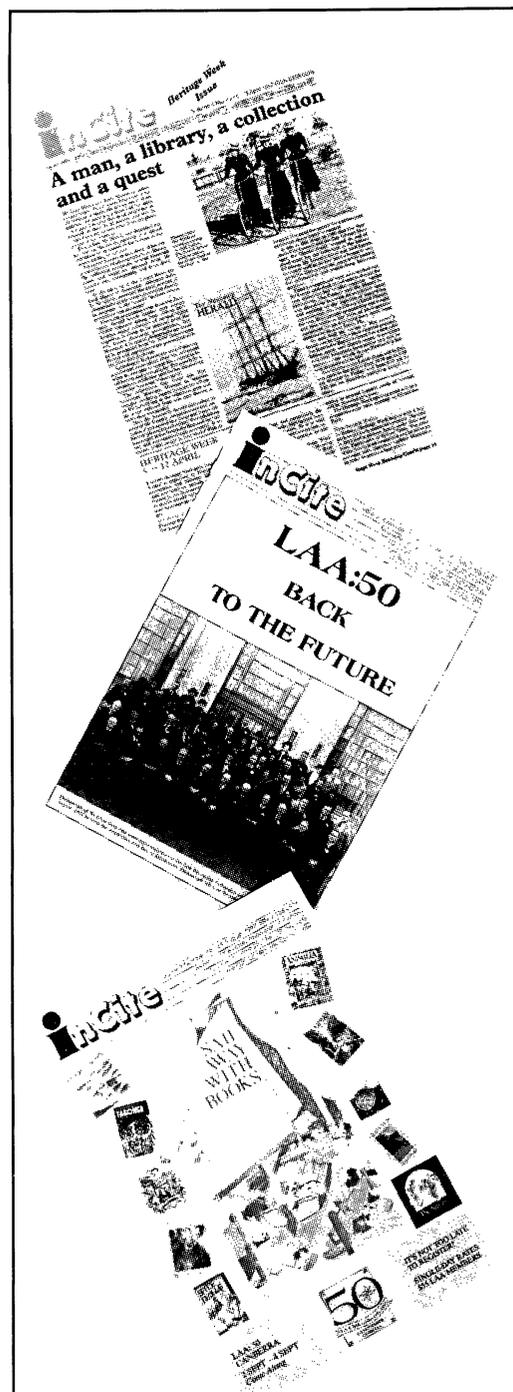
In Australia, this basic truth is evidently ignored by politicians and others, who invariably regard libraries as legitimate initial targets for regressive cuts whenever economies are the order of the day.

There is hardly any human endeavour, however vast or unique, or however small or commonplace, that cannot be assisted or perfected by recourse to the repositories of information that are organised as libraries. Libraries, or similar establishments under any other name, will continue in this role whether the information they contain is retrieved through the medium of printed books or through any other practical media that may be

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Thumbs Down for new SLV cont'd from front page

employed for the storage and retrieval of information.

The intellectual energy generated by adequately provisioned libraries is incalculable in its extent and cannot be readily obtained from any other source. It can be a vital factor in every facet of modern life, ranging from the most mundane domestic chores to ventures as prodigious as the exploration of outer space.

Nevertheless, our libraries continue to operate under unique conditions of financial stringency, while immense expenditures serve such ephemeral and circumscribed interests as recreation and entertainment. As Sir Keith Hancock once said, 'Australia is a wealthy country which chooses to be poor in libraries'.

Recent cheeseparing by the Victorian Government has forced local municipal and rural libraries to contemplate dropping services which the state government chooses to regard as mere frills or gimmicks. Such facilities as book-mobiles to serve outlying communities, as well as aged and disabled patrons, provision for lectures and audiovisual information and readings to initiate children as library users are among essential activities embraced by modern public libraries throughout the world.

More, rather than less funding and a positive, forward-looking approach to the constantly expanding demands of a burgeoning society in the present and in the 21st century are still required urgently. Libraries are the one community service which, not only today, but also throughout their history, have been so deprived of adequate funding as to be incapable of contributing any economies to the public purse.

The low priority allocated to libraries indicates that they are actually regarded as backwaters of society, where bibliophiles might take refuge from the world, instead of being regarded as hives of industry quintessentially vital to every modern community for long hours on practically every day of the year.

Librarianship is the only profession which shares with teaching and research universal responsibilities of enlightenment. Librarians in organising their resources to meet the most exacting demands of every purpose up to the highest levels of modern scientific and technological research have developed standards of professionalism that are just as exacting.

However, a view of librarianship as a function adequately performed by untrained amateurs still persists in some quarters.

In the light of their responsibilities in the modern world, the status of librarians in every country rests initially upon a highly developed corpus of formal theoretical and practical post-graduate training in librarianship.

The staff of a large library must be structured to operate like an intricate machine in which every working part is related to other working parts.

At top-management level, the head or director in particular, though trained and experienced in all areas of professional librarianship, will be so involved in such matters as policy formulation, planning, budgetary administration and public relations that he or she is not likely to handle a library book except by accident.

The realities pertaining to modern libraries and librarianship differ significantly from the notions still entertained by certain elements of all levels of government in Australia.

Congratulations Professor Jean Whyte AM



Professor Jean Whyte, a long-standing member of the LAA, was awarded an Order of Australia in the New Year honours for her services to education especially in the field of librarianship. 1987 was a high profile year for Professor Whyte within the Association as she won the H.C.L. Anderson Award (jointly awarded to Professor Whyte and Mr Jim Dwyer) and had the honour of giving the opening speech at the LAA:50 conference. Entitled 'History of the Australian Institute of Librarians' she gave a fascinating account of the birth of the AIL/LAA. The paper was recently reprinted in *ALJ*.

Professor Whyte's extensive involvement with the LAA includes the editorship of *ALJ* during 1957 - 71, and chairing the Board of Examiners from 1962 - 63. Professor Whyte's career in library education began in 1975 when she became Foundation Professor and Chairman of the Graduate School of Librarianship at Monash University. Previous to this Professor Whyte was Director, Information Resources and Services at the National Library and Associate Librarian (Reader Services) at Fisher Library, University of Sydney.

INDUSTRIAL NEWS

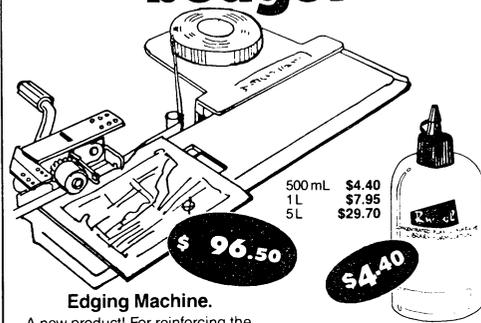
Schools project update

The project team for the Learning and Information Needs of Schools project visited Victoria in December to gather information from interested parties.

These included the senior staff and curriculum officers of the Catholic Education Office and Association for Independent Schools; Ministry of Education officers from the School Library Services Branch and Facilities Branch; principals, teachers and teacher-librarians at schools in all systems and in metropolitan Melbourne, Ballarat, and in the Wimmera - Mallee area; the Victorian State Librarian and senior state library staff with responsibility for public libraries and children's services; parents; students; the Executive Director of ASCIS; the Director and Librarian of ACER; and academics in teacher librarianship. Visits by team members to other states have either taken place or are being arranged.

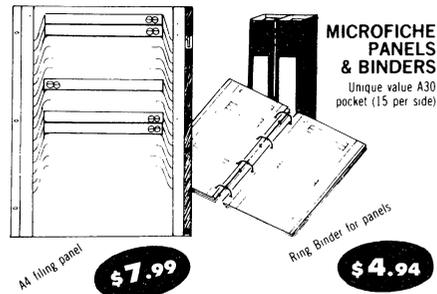
The content and approach of part one of the document has been re-examined and revised.

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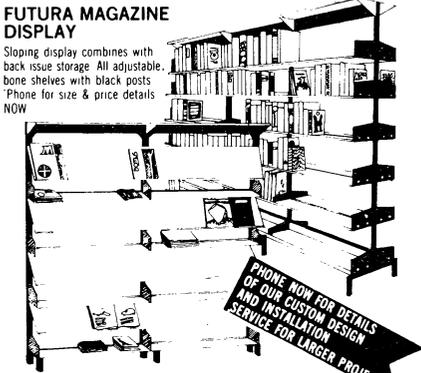


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Get in touch with the LAA by fax. The LAA's fax number is 692 0689.

Louise Lansley
Manager, Educational and Industrial Services.