



the front line

The intellectual health of any profession can be gauged by the volume and quality of the correspondence in its journal.

Eric Moon

For this Frontline I slide temporarily from my library advocacy hobbyhorse and mount another — library journal publishing. Jennifer Redding, Manager of ACHLIS (the Australian Clearing House for Library and Information Science), which abstracts and indexes them all, tells me that there are now some 65 journals and newsletters in library and information science published in Australia.

Too many? Perhaps — inevitably there is dross with the gold. It was thus with apprehension that I viewed the latest offering to surface on my desk. *Australasian Public Libraries and Information Services* (APLIS) aspires to provide for public libraries what every other major area of librarianship already has — its own journal. The first issue, we are informed, is being sent free to every public library system in Australia and New Zealand and a note to PO Box 622, Blackwood 5051, may get you one too.

In his preface to the first issue of *APLIS* Warren Horton, who was himself joint editor

of the *APLIS* progenitor *Australian Public Library Issues* from 1971-73, says, 'We need an effective forum for communication on public library issues. Public libraries in Australia, notwithstanding present funding difficulties, face a potentially exciting future ...' Or as John Levett once wrote, '... remember that it is public libraries which inform the perceptions of the bulk of the Australian body politic.' We can therefore but wish *APLIS*, and that other new complement to *ORANA*, *ASLA's ACCESS*, well, as they attempt the rocky path of library journal publishing.

Of rocky paths no one, in fact, knows more than John Levett, editor of our own primary journal the *Australian Library Journal*. Will the emergence of *APLIS* and *ACCESS* make the *ALJ's* path rockier? I don't think so. That every major area of Australian librarianship now has a discrete journal in fact emphasises just why we need *ALJ* — to remind and reinforce that we are one profession; to require us to examine and restate just what we profess.

If that engenders the 'dry' reading which is the sometime complaint about *ALJ*, so be it. Matters of profession are matters of substance, not lending themselves readily to trivial treatment. Our profession is arguably the weaker because not every member now receives *ALJ* — but the Corporate Plan and Review recognised reality, that receipt of *ALJ* did not guarantee it was wanted.

Yet *ALJ* is still received by many and read by more. It has survived its separation from your membership fee well. It is one of the world's more substantial journals of librarianship, in which we should take more parochial pride (compare the rest with the December

1987 issue of *ALJ* for example — wasn't that a great issue?). Over the next two or three years it will get even better in part as we examine the implications of our broadening aspirations. But *ALJ* will never be cheaper at \$15 for members. In this issue of *InCite* is a subscription form — use it for your benefit and that of your Association.

On the unbundling of *ALJ* from your membership fee, Jean Whyte predicted for *ALJ* a cycle of demise, death and ultimate requirement for restoration of a major journal for the Association. Jean herself will be only too happy if I predict a healthy future for *ALJ*.

I also contend that those 65 titles, accepting the dross with the gold, the ephemeral with the substantial, are the manifestation of a more dynamic, changing, concerned and communicating profession than we often allow ourselves credit for. Agree? Disagree? Add to the gold with your letter to *InCite* or *ALJ*.

*Alan Bundy
President*

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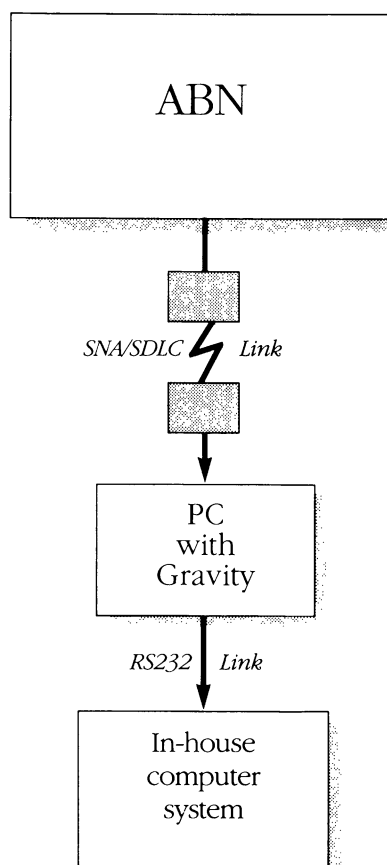
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