



the front line

'The only way to have a friend is to be one'.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

There was a great moment for me when I went back to the Cambridge University Library five years ago and said 'My name is Germaine Greer, I'm a Cambridge PhD, and I'd like to use the library. Is that alright? What do I have to do?' And the man behind the counter said 'Dr Greer, this is your library. Please come in.' I burst into tears. It was the nicest thing anybody ever said to me!

A simple lesson in how to win friends and influence people; a lesson for academic libraries, for all libraries. The concept of Information for the Nation as a sustained campaign of library advocacy should provoke us all to do some soul-searching *now* about what we inflict on our users, how we deter potential users, and how we can publicise what we achieve. If I focus again on public libraries for this column it is because public libraries are, for better and unfortunately sometimes for worse, the popular measure of Australian libraries and librarianship.

Fines

Of the negatives associated with public libraries, fines must surely be the best established. 39 percent of Australian public library services fine adults. 32.8 percent actually fine

children, although admittedly often with discretion. But why fine at all? There is no research of which I am aware demonstrating that fines are effective in achieving whatever they are supposed to achieve in either academic or public libraries. That it is an area where some confusion is apparent.

Witness a Melbourne library, one of Australia's best, which in 1987 *introduced* fines, stating to users 'The charging of fines is now common practice among public libraries and is introduced to ensure more equitable use of our scarce resources.'

Witness Bernie Hawke, Cairns City Librarian, also in 1987 stating 'The Cairns City Council has decided to *abolish* fines charged at the Cairns Library. Its decision has been based on the experience of other libraries which have discontinued charging fines and a detailed study of overdue at the Cairns Library . . . it will also improve library public relations and eliminate the anomalous situation where the honest patrons are usually the ones penalised with overdue fines while the fearful and dishonest ones leave their books and run (if they return them at all) . . . libraries currently charging overdue fines may wish to critically examine whether the humble overdue fine may in fact be doing more damage than good'. Indeed they may.

Access

My local video shop is open 10.00 am — 10.00 pm seven days per week (84 hours a week). It also uses a quaint double reverse, with a twist, Browne charging system, which irritates me, but apparently no one else. My local public library has eclectic hours which are difficult to remember, and which total a bare 37 hours per week (the national average is only 38.13 hours). It does not open on Saturday

afternoon or Sundays and worse it closed completely for two weeks over Christmas and New Year to suit the staff holiday roster. It does however have a nice new automated loan system. Which is truly responding to or anticipating community needs? My video shop or my public library?

The opportunity cost of public libraries not providing access at times to suit their users rather than the convenience of their own staff or the niggardliness of their council is high. It undermines their place in any national information plan, it weakens their community profile and undermines the credibility of public libraries, a credibility which must always have its substance in proactive concern for users. Only 7.24 percent of public library services in Australia provide Saturday afternoon or Sunday opening, and that all too infrequently at the initiative of the Chief Librarian or library staff. It's not good enough. It does not suffice to wring hands and blame council reluctance, lack of funds or staff resistance. The buck stops and starts with the chief librarian and the professional staff.

Annual Reports

Dietrich Borchardt has often lamented that libraries of all types do not make enough use of a primary form of advocacy — annual reports. Agreed. Only 25 percent of public library systems produce an annual report; for all academic libraries it is less than 10 percent; for special libraries the figure is unknown but probably even more slight. The annual report, if it is written at all, is far too often regarded as a chore to be delayed as long as possible and to be as bland in style and content as possible. Yet used properly,

Cont'd page 7

Now a slipped disc can bring instant medical knowledge to everyone.

Slip a MEDLINE* on Silver Platter (R) compact disc into a CD-ROM drive on a IBM compatible personal computer, and the world's important biomedical knowledge appears indexed before your eyes in seconds.

It's MEDLINE*, the bibliographic database of the National Library of Medicine, presented in the fastest, most cost efficient way.

All the benefits (and more) of searching MEDLINE* on-line are there, but without the delays, frustrations and extra costs associated with a telecommunications link-up.

Silver Platter's greatest strength lies in the particular sophistication of its software. Kind and careful to first time users, it still revels in the complexities of the most advanced Boolean search.

Updated quarterly, MEDLINE*



on Silver Platter (R) contains references to carefully selected articles from over 3200 international journals, as well as citations, and in most cases, abstracts, from Index Medicus, the Index of Dental Literature and the International Nursing Index.

Keywords from titles and all significant fields can find citations or execute a simultaneous search of a number of concepts. Index browsing is provided, and search results can be displayed, printed or transferred to disc. On-line 'HELP' is available every step of

the way.

A variety of leasing arrangements including personal computers with CD-ROM disc drives is available from ALDIS, the representative in Australia for CD-ROM databases.

Talk to Aldis. And subscribe to a healthier understanding of medical literature.

aldis

Australian Laser Disk Information Services Pty Ltd.

Australian Laser Disk Information Services Pty Ltd.
Victorian Technology Centre, 275 Normanby Rd,
Port Melbourne 3207.

Phone (03) 647 9724 Fax: 647 9799 Telex: AA 3211

Please send me further information on MEDLINE.

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Phone: _____

The LAA Numbers Game

Is there something significant, some invisible barrier associated with the number 8,000? For those of us who are involved in the LAA numbers game this would seem to be the case.

Not since 1976 has the LAA membership risen above 8,000 — and that was at a time when we had a large number of Registration Examination students. So perhaps 1988 can be the year of the 8,000th member — and this surely is an achievable target.

Last year the Association's General Council set a series of performance goals for the period to 1990. These covered areas such as financial performance, monograph sales, serial subscriptions and membership. The Council believes that the Association can increase its membership by 10 percent in 1988, 8 percent in 1989 and 10 percent in 1990. The higher targets are for conference years, when we normally attract more recruits to the cause.

What proportion of our potential members belong to the LAA? 'Seat of the pants' guesses generally put the figure around 60 percent, but this year we will be more professional in our approach. Branches have been asked to estimate our potential membership in the various member categories — Associates, institutions, students, library technicians, non-professional members. This will require some legwork, and some research, but if we don't know what we can aim for it makes it all the more difficult to reach those targets.

1987 was not a high point in our membership history. We had an overall loss of 270 members. The only Branch to increase its numbers was the Northern Territory Branch,

with an increase of 11.7 percent. Losses in other states ranged from 1.2 percent to 9.3 percent. Pretty discouraging for all those hard-working recruitment committees. And the real problem is that while they do a good job, we fail to keep those members we have worked so hard to recruit. Last year 1,352 members of the Association were 'deemed resigned' because they had not paid fees for two years. A further 271 members resigned, about half because they were no longer employed in librarianship.

We need to find out why our members cease to support the Association, especially that very large number who simply fade from the records without telling us why. This year we will be taking steps to find the reasons.

There are some excellent initiatives being undertaken by Divisions to encourage new members to join — see for example Mary Baker's article in the first issue of *InCite* for the year on the steps being taken to attract young professionals. The challenge then is to keep them as members.

And the 1988 target? We had 7,393 members at 1 January, so a 10 percent increase will take us well over the elusive 8,000.

Sue Phillips

Membership Services Manager

Correction

Ms Diana Killen was incorrectly linked to the Victorian Ministry of Arts on page 9 in the last issue of *InCite*. In fact Ms Killen does not work for the Ministry but is a private consultant.

Frontline cont'd from page 2

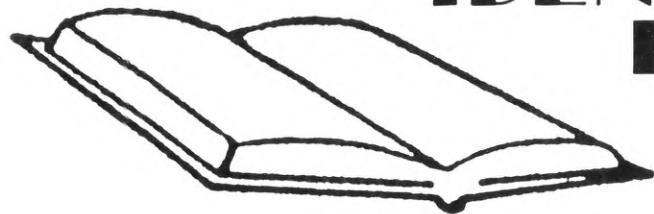
produced promptly and written with a specified purpose it can not only be a record of stewardship but a potent political statement. It can also assist in one of the things libraries are better at than most — communicating and sharing response to change and challenge (did you know that in Australian Library Annual Reports on Microfiche (ALARM) Australia is the only country with a full text microfilm record of library annual reports, dating back to 1872?).

Judith Bernstein, Head of the Business Library, University of New Mexico wrote 'Corporate annual reports comprise the most heavily used primary source material for information about company history, finances, employment, marketing, products and a view of the company's current and future plans'. The message is the same for libraries. Before me is the 1987 report of John Murphy, Librarian of the West Gippsland Regional Library Service and his staff. It is not an expensive glossy but it is a presentable report of challenge met, prefaced by a photograph of all of the library staff, with the byline 'Eager to serve!'. Also one must conclude, hard to ignore. Is there any library school in this country providing tuition in the purpose, value, compilation and marketing of library annual reports?

Every library in this country, small or large, whether the report is mandatory or not, should produce a timely and targeted annual report if it is serious about being taken seriously. Does yours? If not, why not? Does it fine adults? If so, why? Does it fine children? Even more so, why? Does it close its doors at times when users are most likely to want and to be able to use it? If so, why? Tell *InCite*.

Alan Bundy President

IDENTIC BOOKS PTY. LTD. Library Suppliers



IDENTIC BOOKS provides a full range of library supply services, all offered with an emphasis on prompt and personal attention.

Our computerised operations make it simple for you to obtain complete information on all your back orders with us at any time.

Libraries requiring special services or having unique needs are catered for with a minimum of fuss and a maximum of efficiency.

- * FACILITIES FOR ORDER PLACEMENT VIA LIBNET OR FAX.
- * AIRFREIGHTING OF BOOKS FROM THE U.S.A.
- * REPORTS UPDATED MONTHLY AND AVAILABLE IN A FORMAT TO SUIT YOUR ACQUISITION SYSTEM.
- * INVOICES SET OUT AND CATEGORISED ACCORDING TO YOUR INSTRUCTIONS.
- * STANDING ORDERS FOR MONOGRAPHS AND ANNUALS.
- * PRICE AND AVAILABILITY QUERIES WITHOUT OBLIGATION.
- * QUALIFIED AND EXPERIENCED LIBRARIAN ON STAFF.
- * BOOKSELLING SERVICE
- * SEND FOR A FREE BROCHURE

Unit 12/26 Wattle Road,
BROOKVALE N.S.W. 2100
Telephone (02) 939 2933 (02) 939 2278
Fax (02) 905 0578