

# Issues facing public libraries

Several — probably most — of the major issues facing Australian libraries at present directly concern public libraries.

## 'User pays'

At the Australian Libraries Summit last October the most heated debate concerned whether or not the profession should ratify the practice of public libraries charging for certain services. The Summit accepted that a charge may be levied on users for certain 'add-on' services. But what constitutes an 'add-on' service? In the Northern Territory it could be photocopying (which is not charged for); in New South Wales and

Victoria it could be reservations or interlibrary loans (both charged for in many libraries), and there are many other possibilities.

The Summit decided that ACLIS and ALIA should formulate resolutions on this problem separately and then come together and offer one solution for Australian public libraries.

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ALIA Public Library Sections in each State are now considering the draft ALIA statement prepared by a Working Party convened by Christine Frey of the Library School, University of Tasmania.

The Working Party draft was discussed by General Council at its April meeting and referred to all Divisions for consideration and feedback. A redrafted statement including input from Divisions, especially from Public Library Sections, will be put to General Council at its July meeting.

## Interlibrary loan charge

The interlibrary loan charge was another issue referred from the Summit. The validity of the existing \$6 charge was accepted and ACLIS was given responsibility for examining the elements of an interlibrary loan transaction that should form the components of the charge.

Colin Taylor, Chief Librarian at the South Australian Institute of Technology, has begun, for ACLIS, a study of changes in interlibrary loan traffic patterns since the Survey of Australian Interlibrary Lending (SAIL) study, including the effect of the interlibrary loan charge.

Carol Yuen (Public Libraries Division, State Library of New South Wales) and Jane King (President, ALIA Public Libraries Section in Victoria) are the public library representatives on Colin's Committee. They were responsible for the survey in New South Wales and Victoria in 1988, the results of which were reported on at the Public Libraries Section AGM held at the ALIA Conference in Sydney last August. (The basic finding was that, where charges were levied, public libraries were passing the cost on to users in almost 50 per cent of cases.)

The new bigger survey, based on the libraries surveyed in the original SAIL study, was carried out in May. The report is to be completed by August, within the time frame set by the Summit.

Carol and Jane are also to do a more intensive survey of all public libraries in New South Wales and Victoria as a follow up to their 1988 study.

## Public Lending Right

Members of the National Public Libraries Section executive met recently with Harrison Bryan and Alan Johnson of the Public Lending Right Scheme. (Public Lending Right (PLR) compensates Australian authors and publishers when a book is available in public lending libraries.)

The purpose of the meeting was to encourage public libraries to participate in the Scheme and, as part of that,

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to assist in determining useful information for the Scheme that may be given to libraries in return for their cooperation.

The sort of information to be provided is being piloted with the 1987-88 returns and may include such things as the (holdings) score from the sample libraries and the 100 (or even ten) top-scoring authors (in terms of holdings). The information would enable participating libraries to gauge, for example, how they score on the percentage of the PLR checklist held in their stock. It would also allow non-participating libraries to see how they compared with the scores of participating libraries.

#### National statistical database for public libraries

Development of this proposal is continuing under the direction of Jacqui Ecclestone of the State Library of Western Australia.

#### Public library standards

'Towards a Quality Service' is complete! After almost a decade of deliberation, the penultimate document was sent to the Public Libraries Standards Committee on 2 May as a prelude to its formal adoption at ALIA General Council on 21-22 July.

Thanks are due to many people for input over the years (including some who are no longer working in libraries). But our final debt of gratitude is to ALIA's former Manager, Education and Industrial Services, Louise Lansley, who oversaw the final additions, amendments and rewrite after her resignation from ALIA.

#### National Review of Local Government Labour Markets

Most public libraries will be aware of this on-going Review (the results of which are the blue-covered documents that have been arriving at councils and libraries over the past 2 years).

The latest document (March 1989) was Research Paper No. 4: *Results of the Local Government Labour Market Shortages Survey*.

The National Public Libraries Section has provided a submission to the Review, which is particularly thorough and incisive. The real work of the submission was done by Louise Lansley, who, with her broad experience of awards and classifications, salary levels and work level guidelines, was able to provide an excellent overview of the labour issues facing local government libraries.

Ross Gibbs  
National President  
ALIA Public Libraries  
Section



## Introducing VIGLA

Libraries in Victorian government ministries, departments, agencies and statutory authorities have formed a cooperative association under the name Victorian Government Libraries Association (VIGLA).

VIGLA aims to provide government and policy-making bodies with a first point of reference when seeking advice or information about libraries in Victorian government agencies; and to provide a network through which libraries in Victorian government agencies can exchange information, experience, skills and resources, and address common issues, needs and concerns.

The first formal meeting of the new group was on 8 March 1989 in the Ministry of Education. It was attended by librarians from thirty-six government agencies. Quarterly meetings are planned, and the next meeting is scheduled for 8 June at the Mental Health Library Service. This meeting will be addressed by Ross Gibbs, Assistant Director, Library Services, Ministry for the Arts.

VIGLA sees close cooperation with the recently established Library Services Unit in the Ministry for the Arts as being of great benefit in furthering the interests of government agency librarians in Victoria.

ies in Victoria.

#### Cooperative projects

VIGLA and the Library Services Unit have already identified a number of cooperative projects and work has begun on a proposal for a review of position classification standards, including the establishment of up-to-date benchmark positions for librarians and library technicians in government agencies. As part of this project, profiles of Victorian government agency libraries will be developed and held on a database maintained in the Library Services Unit.

VIGLA is interested in making contact with similar groups in other Australian States and Territories with a view to developing a national cooperative network of libraries in government (federal and State) ministries, departments, agencies and statutory authorities.

The Chairperson of VIGLA is Jan Wright, Manager, Library and Archive, Ministry of Education, Victoria (Telephone (03) 628 2460) and the Secretary is City Vroomen, Librarian, Ministry of Housing and Construction, 11th Floor, 250 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000 (Facsimile (03) 650 6671).

Jan Wright  
Chairperson, VIGLA



## Library Support

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Initial enquiries may be directed to Jan Wild on (03) 268 5654 or Mike Beilby on (02) 452 9936. Detailed resumes should be sent to:

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