

# LETTERS

## Bundy's reply

Dear Editor,

Diana Oliver laudably, but unnecessarily, leaps to the public library barricades [*InCite* 8 May] in responding to my Frontline which suggested that all libraries need to evaluate their information services.

A public library example was used for emphasis because (1) public libraries are the one general information service to which nearly all Australians have direct access, and their information delivery performance is therefore more important to more Australians; (2) most of the overseas evaluative studies have focused on public library information delivery.

Until there is a body of comparable research in Australia we have no option but to accept that the findings of such overseas research are broadly applicable to Australia (i.e. that public libraries provide less than 50 per cent wholly correct answers and nearly 20 per cent which are wholly incorrect).

It is important to identify why this may be so. The reasons may include out-of-date reference collections, lack of information technology, lack of trained information services staff — in other words, essentially, lack of resources to do a vital job properly. Until that identification has been achieved the fundamental message of Information for the Nation — that a better resourced national network of library and information services can truly help deliver information for the nation — is

weakened.

One problem for libraries of all types in Australia is that there appears to be no library consultant specialising in helping them evaluate their information delivery. A rare, and remunerative, opportunity I would have thought. Would AIMA or other consultants care to respond?

*Alan Bundy*

Past President, ALIA

## Law libraries

Dear Editor,

As someone who has worked both at the University of Adelaide and the National Library, I was interested to read Dick Finlay's article [*InCite* 24 April] on law libraries. Dick correctly points out that a university law library serves as a 'laboratory for the law practitioner or student, and a research library along the lines of any general library'.

In my experience, there has been a tendency for university law libraries to over-emphasise the former role, in that the libraries have often been seen as 'law school libraries', rather than simply as branch libraries of a general university system specialising in legal materials. The result has often been some lack of integration of the law library service into the university, and relative restriction in access to the collections for those who are not staff or students of the law school.

Turning to the National Library, the comment that 'to law librarians the National Library has been something of a disappointment' is perhaps true. It is also true that the recommendations of the 1974 AULSA report and the 1984 Wilson-Glassen survey relating to the National Library have indeed been unrealistic. It is not clear to me why a 'central secretariat' is needed for law libraries any more than for any other areas of special librarianship in Australia, whether at the National Library or elsewhere.

The question of the National Library's role in collecting legal materials is presently under review, along with all its collecting policies. The implementation of a new collecting policy within the Library is likely to require a greater specialisation of collection development responsibilities among National Library staff and, if this eventuates, the law speciality would benefit along with others.

It may be of interest that these matters are to be discussed at a meeting of the Australian Law Librarians' Group with National Library staff, provisionally scheduled for 8 August, during the Special and Law Librarians' Conference

in Adelaide. All librarians interested in attending should contact the ALLG National Convener, Yvonne Butler (03) 619 0771.

*Eric Wainwright*

Deputy Director-General  
National Library of Australia

## Don't we need any more promotion?

Dear Editor,

In April this year, the 'Young Ones' committee organised a 'Promote or Perish' workshop aimed at library and information professionals, to be held at Sydney Technical College. To our amazement, only eight people responded to the invitation and the event was postponed. I remembered the early-to-mid 1980s when Vicki Austin, from Eric White and Associates at the time, filled a boardroom with information professionals on the topic of marketing and promotion for the librarian. It was brand new ground and everyone came away from the meeting enthusiastic.

I am mystified about the lack of response to our workshop and do not put it down to the lack of need of any more tips for promoting the profession and our service. Perhaps I am uninformed, and we really have overcome our promotional problems to the extent that we can now just sit up on our ivory tower and observe it all happen. Perhaps we are all perishing and no one has the time to keep the ship afloat; instead they are going down gracefully.

The 'Young Ones' is a group within the NSW Branch Council of ALIA that endeavours to encourage young members to participate in professional activities outside their own working environments. We are not a right-wing group anti the more senior members of the Association; in fact, we draw on their skills and experience to sort out our priorities.

The 'Young Ones' group and committee has been operating for well over 1 year now. It has been far from easy planning activities, and I am sorry to say we have not prospered at all. We hear and echo the thoughts of many young and new members of the Association, but somehow we do not seem to grow. Are we running up the wrong garden path, or is there a general apathy within the profession? I would love to hear your answers and invite you to call me during business hours on (02) 875 6289.

*Mary Baker*

Convener, 'Young Ones'



ALIA LIBRARY  
TECHNICIANS SECTION

**NATIONAL ANNUAL  
GENERAL MEETING**

THURSDAY, 27 JULY

Main Session Room, Conrad International Hotel, Broadbeach, Gold Coast, Qld, Time: 5.00 pm

Contact: Vikki Hopwood for further details (08) 333 9670.