

# FRONT LINE



Kay L. Winter - ALIA ACT Branch President

1989 has been a year of major external changes for the ACT Branch and Groups, most of which have been brought about by the continuing emphasis on a lean public sector. The major change within the Branch itself was the appointment of Branch Council President Alex Byrne as University Librarian to the Northern Territory University. Our hearty congratulations to Alex who departed in April to a much warmer climate, if not more flexible financial restraints.

For those who live in the ACT, the major change for 1989 was self govern-

ment. This will lead to a review of the funding structure for those libraries that were formerly part of the Federal Government Department of ACT Administration. The libraries affected are the ACT Library Service; the school libraries in the ACT Schools Authority; The ACT Institute of TAFE libraries; and the special libraries: the ACT Government Services Libraries, the ACT Community and Health Services Libraries (including the Health Advancement Branch Library, the Royal Canberra Hospital Library and the Woden Valley Hospital Library), the ACT Electricity and Water Authority Libraries, and the ACT Schools Authority Library.

The Branch will be monitoring any impact the change to self government has on the ability of these libraries to provide services to their current and potential users.

As reported by Colin Steele, last year's Branch Council President, in *Frontline* [*InCite* Vol. 9, No. 21], the Branch has been watching the Canberra casino development (or Section 19 Development) with the view to the inclusion of the new library for the ACT Library Service in the building complex. Sue Kosse has been involved in more recent negotiations and, I am sure, will report on progress in this regard.

In July, the Branch used its annual prize award dinner to meet both the

new local politicians and the federal politicians representing the ACT. The new Chief Minister, Rosemary Follett, awarded the prizes. Besides the members of Branch Council, the dinner was attended by most of the senior public service librarians, both Federal and Territorial, together with the senior librarians from the academic institutions. From the Branch's point of view this was a most successful evening, providing some of us with a personal introduction to a number of politicians who may have an impact on libraries.

For those of us who neither live in the ACT nor work for those libraries affected by self government, the Federal Government's funding arrangements with the push towards a leaner public sector have been the major change agent. For the academic libraries, the major change is the Dawkins' policy on the amalgamations of academic institutions. The ACT Group of UCLS held a very successful 1-day seminar in April to examine the impact amalgamations may have on library service, not to mention on the career paths of a number of librarians.

The Special Libraries Section is also deeply concerned with a number of financial and administrative changes. The last of the branch libraries formed as the direct result of the 1987 federal ministry amalgamations finally consoli-

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dated this month. As the compiler of the *ACT special libraries guide*, I am delighted to report that there appears to be only one more library that is due to move in the next couple of months. What with the moves that were the direct result of the ministerial amalgamations, and those that were planned as departmental and agency moves to new accommodation, only about 25 per cent of government special libraries have not been affected in the last year or so.

At the same time, the librarians of the Australian Public Service (APS) are still following the deliberations of the Australian Federal Libraries Committee, which was set up by Cabinet to provide recommendations on APS Libraries, as the result of the 'efficiency scrutiny into APS libraries' (i.e. the Block Report). The original rumoured final outcome of this 'scrutiny' was the formation of a single APS Library for the whole of the ACT or at least one large library for each geographic area. This was one of the tenets that the Branch subcommittee to look at marketing the government special libraries to the Senior Executive Service (SES) was set up to counter (as also announced by Colin in his last year's Frontline).

This subcommittee has met regularly throughout the year and, together

with the Special Libraries Section organised a successful workshop in February to help librarians find viable ways of marketing their libraries — not only to their users but also to senior management. Our biggest problem is that decision makers are usually in corporate services and financial management areas, and have never used the library at work, probably rarely at university, and are of an age when there were almost no school libraries. If any decisions have been based on the research of lesser officers (who had used the library) then usually all references to the library have been deleted from the final report.

The workshop provided a variety of strategies to overcome some of our problems. Even those who were already marketing their libraries came away with new ideas. Nevertheless, the subcommittee felt that a direct approach to the SES was warranted. A June launch of IFTN aimed solely at the SES, i.e. lunch at a top-class hotel with a high-profile guest speaker, was postponed when the expected major funding of IFTN did not eventuate and the vital advertisements could not be placed in the major business magazines. Two members of the subcommittee met with Anne Hazell in Adelaide during the

Third Asian - Pacific Special and Law Librarians' Conference and now have a number of options to pursue with the whole committee. The matter will not be dropped, and hopefully we will have a successful result to announce in next year's Frontline.

The Branch is still not happy with the level of professional membership of ALIA. I have spoken to the Canberra CAE students about the work of the Association and the need to join their professional association, but there are major pockets of long-time professionals we need to target: the greater the percentage of membership the better position we are in to get the power brokers to listen. With a membership drive in mind, it would be wonderful to have accurate head-office records of membership. There is nothing worse than targetting a potential member only to find that they rejoined ALIA months ago, but have not yet made it to their branch membership list or to the distribution list of *InCite*, etc. This Branch certainly supports an upgrade in the current computer facilities.

Kay L. Winter  
President, ALIA ACT Branch



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