

ALIA study tour* for 1989 — the management of local studies resources

As the recipient of the ALIA Study Grant Award for 1989, I had the opportunity to travel in Britain and Canada from January to July, 1989, to study the management of local studies resources.

The study involved visits to a variety of collecting agencies: to public libraries with local studies/local history included as one element of a reference collection, as a functioning local studies unit, or as a local studies/archive unit; to autonomous local studies centres; to record offices, city archives, municipal archives or provincial archives with extensive local holdings; to museums and tertiary institutions with local holdings; and to local historical society collections.

I held discussions with professional groups, with library and archives administrators, with custodians of local archives and local collections, and with educators lecturing in library science and archives administration. I also considered local studies provision in countries other than Britain and Canada.

The study has two main outcomes: a report identifying those management issues that are of relevance to Australian local studies librarianship; and a statement of policy and planning guidelines for the establishment of local studies collections in Australia. It is hoped that the Local Studies Section, at the National and State level, as well as the Special Libraries Section and the Public

Libraries Sections in each State, will provide input to the guidelines document.

One of the major observations made in the report is concerned with the variety of agencies involved with the collection or custody of local historical resource materials: in both Britain and Canada, archival institutions and tertiary libraries, as well as public libraries, are managing materials classified in Australia as 'local studies resources' — varied format materials describing one local community. Trends in the management of such resources indicate the importance of the application of archival, as well as library, systems and procedures for the arrangement and description of materials.

A related issue is concerned with the importance of effective regional networks linking local studies or community archives centres, and the need for the development of standardised procedures and systems to control the resources.

The policy and planning guidelines that are being developed are based on the format of *ALIA policy and planning guidelines for public libraries*, but are being formulated according to principles enunciated in a majority of local studies and archival policy documents produced by agencies and professional associations in the two countries visited. They contain specific provision for the development of policies on col-

lection development and resource management, conservation, services, physical facilities for the collection, staffing and promotion.

The study tour and the consequent development of the 'Guidelines' highlight a major result of the study: that there is no one type of local studies library which can be taken as a prototype for all communities. Conditions in communities vary greatly, and the establishment of such a collection will depend on a number of variables. Geographic isolation, population density, community priorities, local government priorities, public library priorities, and the nature of existing community collecting agencies all contribute to the development of a collection or community archive, which should be specific to that community's needs.

It is hoped that the development and eventual distribution of the 'Guidelines' will provide a viable tool for more effective management of Australian local studies resources.

Margaret Wyatt

* ALIA makes funds available each year to support practising librarians/information professionals wishing to undertake a study project. The intention is to assist people at middle-management level, who do not have access to institutional support or study leave, to undertake projects they would otherwise be unable to do because of the time and costs involved.

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mary Follett. Politicians were seated with groups of librarians on an individual basis, which allowed lobbying on library and information issues as well as social discourse.

Demonstrations of ABN were given by Kerry Webb (National Library of Australia), and of CD-ROMs such as Sociofile by Margaret Cazabon (ANU Library). These were highly appreciated by the politicians. There were also displays of library promotional material. (Unfortunately, the material available from both ACLIS and ALIA did not compare well to that of the American

Library Association.)

The occasion was a highly successful one that allowed the local Branch members, as well as ALIA's President, Averill Edwards, to press the case for the profession at both local and federal levels.

Colin Steele



11 Right to left: Senator Bob McMullan with Kerry Webb demonstrating ABN, ALIA (ACT Branch) Dinner, 18 July 1989.

10 Left to right: Warren Horton, Director - General (NLA), Rosmary Follett, Chief Minister and Jenny Gleeson at the ALIA (ACT BRANCH) Dinner, 18 July 1989.

