

Changes at AGPS

Briefings on the latest developments at the Australian Government Publishing Service (AGPS) were the subject of the most recent meeting of the AGPS-ACLIS Liaison Committee (AALC).

AGPS has placed increasing emphasis on cost recovery and commercial viability over the past couple of years. Almost no government appropriation is now made to support the government publishing program. AGPS is operating under a new Business Charter, which effectively supersedes the old Charter. (Copies of AGPS Circular No. 49 detailing the changes are available from me. C/- Canberra CAE, PO Box Belconnen ACT 2616, telephone (062) 522 246.)

The changes are to be reviewed by July 1991, from which time Commonwealth departments and authorities may be permitted to make their own publishing arrangements if they wish. Should this happen, the role of AGPS in central bibliographic control and distribution would be affected. Concern was expressed at the AALC meeting that Commonwealth government publications could revert to the chaotic state they were in before the Erwin Report (1964) recommended the establishment of a central government office.

Electronic publishing

A variety of developments were outlined. DISKROM Australia has been set up as a joint venture between AGPS and Computer Law Services Pty Ltd. In the near future DISKROM will be making Commonwealth legislation available on CD-ROM with sophisticated search software.

Under an agreement with Telecom, AGPS has mounted AEGIS (Australian Electronic Government Information Services) on Viatel, which includes the *Commonwealth government directory* and Bookshop catalogue among other services.

AGPS is entering demand publishing, with a network of laser printers in the AGPS Bookshops linked to a central database in Canberra. This will enable a copy of an Act, for example, to be printed locally overnight following a request. Also included is a facility to provide out-of-print material using an OCR scanner.

It seems possible that, in areas without an AGPS Bookshop, libraries could serve as local outlets for this system. (The earlier trial scheme using public libraries to sell AGPS publications —

the AGPS Library Sales Scheme Pilot [see *InCite* 20 February 1987] — was unsuccessful.)

New publications

The *Commonwealth government directory* update now has more than 600 subscriptions. It includes history notes, and information gathered from sources such as the Ministerial document service. The *Commonwealth digest* will provide a fortnightly digest of ministerial statements, press releases etc; publication is expected to begin in September. A *guide to legislation* will be distributed free to school, public and tertiary libraries as well as to lawyers. Other proposed publications include a dictionary of government acronyms and abbreviations, and an A-Z guide to government information and services.

Parliamentary papers

The stamps inside documents indicating they belong to the *Parliamentary papers series* are unsatisfactory to all libraries. AGPS indicated that this was a matter for Parliament to consider; it has been approached with a suggestion that adhesive labels be placed on the outside covers. Distribution of the 1983 collated sets of papers is awaiting the supply of the index by Parliament.

Deposit and free-issue scheme

The scheme was reported to be working well, though with the usual small problems. Free-issue libraries are to be reminded they should make an annual report on their use of the scheme. Consideration is currently being given to the extension of the scheme to new universities, created as part of the changes occurring in tertiary education. There would be substantial costs involved in this.

AGPS has recently been appointed official printer and publisher for the new ACT Government. This means that deposit and free-issue libraries will receive ACT government publications through the scheme.

Permanent paper

Jackie Millard, Conservator at the State Library of Victoria, has tested the paper used in several Commonwealth and Victorian government publications of enduring value, and found that most of it was not of good quality. (A copy of her

brief report is also available from me.)

AGPS responded that they do not use permanent paper because it is expensive and may not be satisfactory for half tones or colour, and because many publications are not viewed as archival by the author departments.

The introduction of permanent paper would need to be at the request of the author department — for example, Parliament in the case of Hansard.

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NSW VIDEO PURCHASING CO-OP.

The NSW Video Purchasing Co-operative is now entering its third year of successful operation. Twenty-seven libraries are now members, thirteen of these in the country. At the annual meeting on 27 January 1989, members discussed the previous years' progress, and set policies for the present year.

The Co-operative began in 1987 following approaches by a number of public libraries to the Public Libraries Department for a cooperative venture to purchase high-quality educational VHS videos more cheaply. Special Grant funds were made available, and each participating library contributed \$2000. Titles were then selected and, with the assistance of the NSW State Film and Video Service, multiple copies of these videos were purchased, achieving a discount of more than 70 per cent.

In 1988, the Co-operative joined with the South Australian State Library and the State Film Centre of Victoria to choose videos from a list of some 100 titles preselected by the State Film Centre of Victoria. Emphasis was on Australian-produced material and covered subject areas such as 'social issues', 'health and sexuality', 'politics and history' and 'children's stories'. Each library could choose thirty-five titles, and extra titles were selected by the Co-operative's committee with the Special

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