

Letters

Dear Editor,

I would like to add to the recent debate on the value of Friends of the Library Groups. Recently, I experienced the most rewarding moment in my twenty two years as a librarian. I am born again! I was pleased to accept an invitation to be guest speaker at a Friends of the Willunga Library meeting. A surprise was in store.

The Friends of the Willunga Library are closely supported by the local Quilters Guild who had donated a magnificent quilt—a work of art—as a prize in a raffle to aid the library. The raffle raised nearly \$1,000 and many of the tickets were sold by Pierre who had been watching the progress of the quilt with admiration and delight. Pierre is physically disabled, in a wheel chair, has speech difficulties, cannot read and is a foundation member of the Friends. Pierre is about to move into independent housing and as a housewarming present, in appreciation for his work on behalf of the Friends and as a sign of affection the Quilters presented him with his own magnificent quilt. Pierre shone with pride and pleasure. Warmth and caring filled the room.

Libraries are information—libraries are also people

Margaret Dunstone
Consultant
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Dear Editor,

I am responding to Mr Wilkinson's* comments on the CSIRO library system, published in this column in the last issue of *InCite*.

Mr Wilkinson fails to make a key distinction in writing about CSIRO. This is between the central collection at East Melbourne and the separate collections of the research divisions. Access to the central collection has suffered in recent years and its staffing has fallen, although not as substantially as Mr Wilkinson states. This is a result of questioning the purpose and role of this collection which mainly exists to service the needs of professional groups in the Information Services Unit on the East Melbourne site. It has, for historic reasons, also housed a large number of titles acquired on gifts and exchange, some of which are of undoubted importance, others are of little interest.

This aspect of the central collection is subject to ongoing assessment in order to ensure that accessions and storage resources are used to best advantage.

*Mr Wilkinson has written to let us know that he has retired from Macquarie University, with which we associated him and his letter. Ed.

However, it is quite untrue that there have been 'drastic cuts in the exchange of journals'. In the past two years exchange agreements have been reduced if they have been inequitable or if the recipient can pay. This has had minimal impact on the number of titles received in return.

Some 4668 exchange titles identified as essential or desirable by CSIRO Divisional librarians are currently being priced to determine the best and most economical method of receipt. It is highly unlikely that these titles will be discontinued, although the means of acquisition may alter.

It should be remembered that CSIRO is not alone in its assessment of the economics of exchange programmes. Recent correspondence from the British Library Document Supply Centre elicited the statement that 'we (the BLDSC) consider exchange the least satisfactory method of acquiring material; we undertake such agreements only if forced to.'

As regards the 'research collections' of the libraries in the individual divisions, there have certainly been constraints. Even so, relative to CSIRO as a whole, divisional libraries have fared reasonably well. In other words, the research collections and access to them are being given the same importance now as before. During our current study of the CSIRO site at North Ryde, home to 7 divisions or major parts thereof, we found very strong support for library services on the part of senior research staff and management.

These are the people who directly determine the share of resources apportioned to libraries. By and large, the research collections seem to be quite safe in their hands.

It is interesting to note that recent external funding of CSIRO research projects has resulted in research initiatives in new and applied areas of science with a share of the funds supporting the purchase of new and unique serial titles.

Mr Wilkinson is also concerned about

recording locations for material transferred from CSIRO to other institutions. He may be right about the ineffectualness of the bodies he mentions. My point is that while CSIRO can and does make every attempt to do this, ultimately, only the recipient can determine when an item has been added to their collection. This still stands.

As far as a criterion of zero requests in one year—either for culling or cancelling gifts and exchange—I agree with Mr Wilkinson. On its own this would be inadequate. Again, however, the distinction between the central collection and the divisional collections is a key consideration. I am assuming that the criterion would only apply to material in the central collection. Such material has generally already been rejected by the relevant research division as irrelevant to their needs.

Finally, I suggest that it is because CSIRO's research managers attempt to be economically rational (but emphatically not 'short term') in their thinking that they place such a high value on library services. It would be depressing if libraries were only valued by the economically irrational.

James A. Lumbers
Assistant General Manager
Information Services Unit

Dear Editor,

I assume the change in name of the Association by royal deed poll will mean a change in the designation of Associates and Fellows of the newly titled Association.

I am not sure that I want to be known as a FALIA.

Laurie Brown
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Mr Brown's attention is drawn to an item on page 9 of *InCite* Vol 10 No 2. Ed.

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