

Front Line



Alan Bundy
Past President, ALIA

Promotion, Potential and Performance

After some twenty years afloat, that flagship of Australian library promotion, the Australian Library Promotion Council, has struck financial rocks and foundered. The story of the ALPC will perhaps be told in a library school thesis one day. It must suffice for now to acknowledge the contributors to its achievements—people such as Dulcie Stretton CBE, John Ward, Doug Savige and Colin Watson. And there are many more, librarians, publisher's, booksellers and laypersons alike, who gave

unstintingly to the ALPC during the two decades which saw Australia achieve not only libraries in most of its 11,500 schools, but also public libraries for 99% of its population. Nor should we forget the support of the Library Council of Victoria and State Librarians in accommodating the ALPC for so long in the State Library of Victoria.

Who should take up the national promotional and advocacy challenge? ALIA's first object is 'to promote and improve the services of libraries and information agencies'. It is ALIA which is now assuming the advocacy leadership so long assumed by other library associations around the world. As the demise of the ALPC indicates, to sustain meaningful and professional library advocacy needs a staffing, accommodation and financial infrastructure of substance. It needs market access for promotional products. It will also need a continuation of that selfless and broad visioned professional and lay contribution which characterized the ALPC and its related state bodies.

Library advocacy is much more than buying posters to display to our users. Such actions may fill us with comfort, but they warm not the pullers of our pursestrings. Thus, ALIA's development of the *Information For The Nation* campaign, to demonstrate to Australian decision makers over the next three years the uniquely co-operating national infrastructure of library and information

services; to state its achievement; to suggest its potential; to emphasize the need for a National Information Policy and Plan.

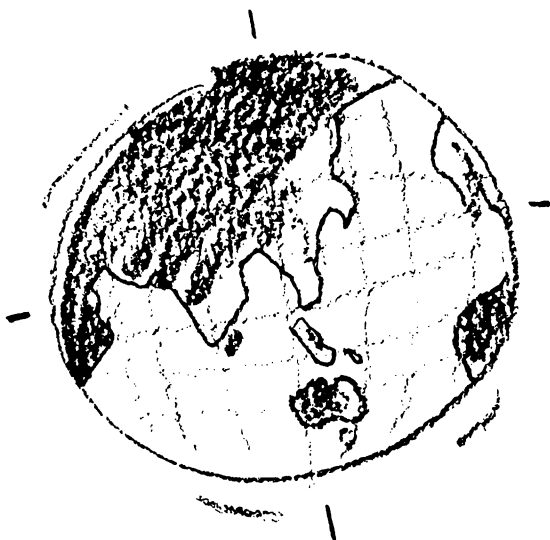
The Challenge of IFTN

ALIA's first objective is not only to promote but to improve the services of libraries and other information agencies. How? What needs improving? IFTN is a fundamental challenge, as yet unperceived by many, to our assumptions, our complacency and our performance as information providers to the nation. Are libraries reliable and fast information providers? Research says NO. Studies have found that public libraries, for example, provide less than 50% wholly correct answers and, more damning, nearly 20% which are wholly incorrect. And the study of state library services undertaken by ALIA with the first IFTN funding from the Federal Department of Industry, Technology and Commerce confirms that business and industry want reliable answers in 24 hours or less, not 24 days.

As McClure states in *Current trends in information: research and theory* (Haworth Press 1987), 'Most libraries have not studied the accuracy of their public service staff. The body of unobtrusive research studies conducted in academic and public libraries challenge librarians' blind faith that their services are fine and of high quality.'

Concluded at foot of page 7.

A small indication of the areas of our expertise.



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'Lessons from Leningrad'

A workshop on disaster response

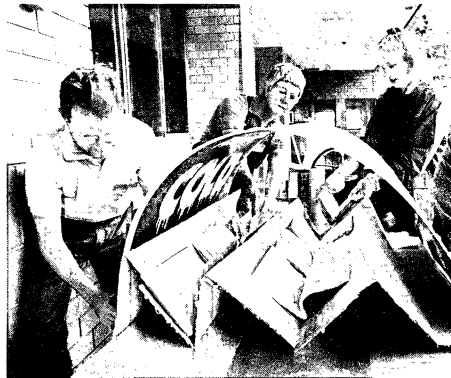
ON 14 February 1988, a fire destroyed a large proportion of the material held in the Academy of Sciences Library in Leningrad. On the same date a year later, 44 librarians and conservators from around the country gathered together to begin a four-day workshop on disaster response, to ensure that in the event of a major disaster in Australia, there would be a good supply of personnel trained to respond.

The workshop, titled 'Lessons from Leningrad' as a grim reminder of the purpose of the exercise, included a day of lectures, two days of hands-on experience, and a day of review.

Participants heard Alan Howell of the State Library of New South Wales deliver several important papers on disaster planning in perspective, and on the scientific aspects of conservation in the context of disaster response. In addition, Max Borchardt from CAVAL Ltd spoke about the development of disaster plans and their integration into the collection management structure of a library's administrative routines. Delegates were also able to view a number of videos that focussed on disaster response.

On the second day ('Disaster Day') participants were given the opportunity to 'recover' material from a flooded library (actually a simulated flood) in the basement of one of the buildings at Deakin University, which was the venue for the workshop. As well as retrieving the material from the 'library', those involved were required to attempt emergency recovery techniques ('first-aid' for books) and learnt how to use equipment such as walkie-talkies, pumps, generators, wet-dry vacuum cleaners, and emergency lighting. The accompanying photographs show various stages of the exercise.

On the third day, after cleaning out the site, the workshop relocated to the Laverton store of the Victoria Public



Making a wind tunnel for drying books and journals

L-R: David Harris, Ruth Dixon, Sue Gatenby



Recovery

L-R: Judy Doig, Pat Howard, Tony Cavanagh, Gwen Baker, Edward Quinn.



Learning to use equipment

L-R: Howard Oorloff, Warwick Peberdy, Steve Atkinson, Kim Morris, Judy Paneros, Ron Collins, Richard Overall



Learning sludge tactics

Workshop participants attend to Max Borchardt.

[All photos courtesy Greg Noakes.]

Records Office. Participants were able to see first-hand a range of different products used in the restoration of damaged materials, and had a chance to see the types of damage that water can cause to materials.

But the highlight of the visit to Laverton was the chance to work on some genuine damaged material that had been sent there from the recently flooded St Kilda Library. A group of ten seized the chance to put

their newly acquired skills to the test. Working under the supervision of Alan Howell, the group managed to process several pallets of badly damaged pamphlets, books and journals.

On the final day, participants had an opportunity to review a disaster that had occurred as a result of a fire in a major Sydney music collection, in the context of aspects of the techniques they had learnt over the previous three days.

All delegates agreed that the exercise had been a valuable one that provided excellent training. CAVAL, the Victorian consortium responsible for organizing the workshop, was especially pleased with the event, which it regarded as a major training activity for the CAVAL libraries.

Max W. Borchardt
CAVAL Ltd

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Information For The Nation is ultimately about performance. Think about it. Does your library have an Information Delivery Mission and Policy displayed for all users and staff to see at its front door? Does it

regularly evaluate the accuracy and speed of its information service? The first publishable response faxed to me (08) 436 226 receives a dozen fine (what else?) bottles of South Australian wine. There should be 14,000 responses. I think, alas, my cellar is safe.