

Statistical database under scrutiny

A recent initiative by the Council of Cultural Ministers is likely to have a wide-ranging impact on Australian librarians — the Council, as part of a general data-gathering exercise, is planning a statistical database on libraries.

The data are to be collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), and will thus have authority at all levels

In particular, the diversity of special libraries does not yet seem to be fully grasped by SAG.

of government. However, some members of the library community have expressed reservations about the ability of the proposed Statistical Framework to describe accurately the complexity of the Australian library system.

Statistical Advisory Group

The Council has appointed a Statistical Advisory Group (SAG) to prepare the 'Statistical Framework for the Culture and Leisure Industry'. Libraries are defined as one of its nine sub-sectors, which include museums, art galleries, publishing enterprises and national parks.

The process of data collection is planned to begin in 1989-90. At the moment, ALIA supports the notion of a national database for libraries, but is concerned that it should give an accurate picture of libraries.

More importantly, the draft Framework divorces librarianship from other

parts of the information industry just when ALIA and its education base are recognising the rapid convergence of information and communication technologies in modern information work. In particular, the diversity of special libraries does not seem to have been fully grasped by SAG.

In fact, the library world has proved more difficult to fit into the Framework than SAG had originally thought. Representations are being made to SAG to modify its Framework — built by applying ABS' standard definitions to the library sub-sector.

In October 1988, SAG called a (second) Workshop in Perth. For reasons of economy, librarians invited were mainly from Western Australian libraries of



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1 Andy Exon

3 Kerry Smith

2 Jacqui Ecclestone

4 Alison Crook

various types, and were in no sense representative of the library profession as a whole. The attendees determined that the draft Framework prepared for SAG

¹The Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO) is used by ABS to define industrial groups. For example, that for Librarians (reference no. 2911) appears to exclude graduates from 3- or 4-year library courses.

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by their consultants (Corporate Concern, Adelaide) needed substantial revision.

In particular, it was felt that the ABS' tools on which the Framework was based needed correction¹, and there needed to be a proper method of representing librarians.

SAG has prepared Short- and Long-Term Action Plans. Broadly, these plans set out the scope of the Framework, identify gaps in existing data, and show how these gaps might be plugged. In most cases this will mean working through existing organisations or systems of data collection, although SAG plans to request the ABS to become involved in data collection in the longer term.

During and after a SAG meeting in April this year, librarians were given an opportunity to modify plans prepared by SAG. The main aim of modifications was to ensure that categories already in use by ANZALDATA, and planned by the State Librarians' Council Project, would tally with the SAG categories in a useful way. SAG has indicated that there will be further opportunities to modify the categories before data are collected.

Support IFTN



As a newcomer to the library world I find it amazing that librarians themselves are not making more of an effort to inform the public of what is happening in the service today.'

These are the words of Mieke Hinchcliffe-Wood, the newly appointed Campaign Director of the Library Campaign in the United Kingdom. With objectives generally similar to those of the Information for the Nation (IFTN) campaign, although focused entirely on public libraries, the Library Campaign aims to 'harness a very strong public opposition which in the end will prevent the government and the local authorities from treating the library service as a soft option'.

With the same target group in mind, the IFTN Committee has chosen to place the first series of advertisements of the print media campaign in *The House Magazine*, which is distributed to members of Federal Parliament.

The series of ten advertisements, which will appear throughout the autumn session of parliament, focuses on various kinds of library and information services. It will culminate at the end of the session in a large advertisement giving statistics about the size of the Australian library and information network. The message will emphasise our successes, but point out how much more effective we could be if we were better resourced and supported.

The contributions of the sponsors listed below have made this series of advertisements possible.

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Gaining representation of librarians on the planning team has been another difficulty. Although as a profession we see clearly how we are organised, it has been interesting to observe the difficulties an outsider has had in sorting out the various parts of Australian librarianship. Nevertheless, organisations within librarianship have now been alerted to the activities and importance of SAG and SAG has recognised the importance of consulting with the library profession by inviting representatives of ACLIS and the State Librarians' Council.

ALIA was represented at both Workshops in Perth. Alison Crook (State Librarian, New South Wales), representing ACLIS, and Janine Schmidt (Director, Collection Services, State Library, New South Wales) attended the last SAG meeting in April.

SAG is not alone

Meanwhile, there are several initiatives within the library profession that have addressed the issue of statistics in recent years. In particular:

- The State Librarians' Council began a project in 1988 to standardise statistics for National, State and Public Libraries. A report by Jacqui Ecclestone (State Library Services of Western Australia) outlined a detailed procedure for achieving this, and further work is continuing in all States with the aim of collecting statistics from July 1989.
- For many years academic libraries in Australia and New Zealand have published an annual statistical survey in *Australian Academic and Research Libraries*. Geoff Allen (Librarian

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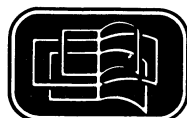
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Notes from the Executive Director



Canberra move update

The documentation for ALIA's national headquarters building in Canberra should be finalised by the architects within a month.

During May, expressions of interest are being sought from potential tenderers for the building contract. These will be screened, and a select number will be invited to submit tenders. The building contract should be let by the end of June, when work can begin.

Following a tree-planting ceremony at the building site on 21 May — arranged by the ACT Branch and ALIA office staff and including an address by Averill Edwards, the 1989 President — two more ceremonies are planned before the building is finally commissioned. These are the laying of the foundation stone towards the end of 1989 and the opening ceremony in mid 1990.

There have been many expressions of interest in the auction of the Ultimo building on 31 May. ALIA's solicitor is drawing up a contract of sale, which will be available for potential purchasers to peruse well before the event.

A Move Coordination Committee has been established to assist me in



managing the move to Canberra. The members of the Committee are Kerry Webb (ACT Branch Councillor and General Treasurer for 1989), Jan Cree (a representative of the NSW Branch) and myself. Our first meeting was on 18 May.

I have provided the General Council with draft plans and a budget for the relocation, for discussion by the Executive Committee at its 19 May meeting. A date for the move should be established sometime in May.

Meanwhile, in ALIA's Sydney office, temporary arrangements and appointments have been brought into effect to cover the loss of senior staff. Please do not hesitate to contact us on ALIA matters — we shall do our best to assist you.

Sue Kosse

Executive Director ALIA



ALIA 1990



CONFERENCE PINS

The ALIA 1990 Conference pins are now available from ALIA head office, 376 Jones Street, Ultimo, 2007. Cost: \$5 (includes postage and handling).

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ian, Curtin University of Technology) began a process of review of this system in October 1988.

- ALIA's Special Libraries Section has begun to address the issue of statistics in its own sector.
- TAFE heads have reached agreement on statistics to be collected in this sector.

ALIA proposes to keep a vigilant eye on this important development, and is seeking to maintain its representation at SAG Workshops. Those who doubt the necessity for such vigilance may like to note, as a 'for instance', the recent Western Australian² forecast of a 56 per cent oversupply of librarians in WA — both the supply and demand figures are based on the ABS definitions to be used by SAG.

For your information, the Second SAG Libraries Workshop in Perth in October 1988 was attended by:

Peter Brokensha (Senior Consultant, Corporate Concern)

Jacqui Ecclestone (State Librarians' Council Statistics Project)

Andy Exon (representing Sue Kosse, ALIA)

Anthony Ketley (National Library of Australia)

Alice Leong (representing Geoff Allen, ANZALDATA)

Chris Mulder (WACAE)

Nigel Penfold (WA Dept of the Arts, SAG member)

Jean Ryding (Wanneroo Public Library)

Ian Smith (Director, Cultural Statistics Task Force, SAG)

Kerry Smith (Cultus Group)

John Videbich (ABS, WA)

For further information, please contact: The Executive Director, ALIA, 376 Jones Street, Ultimo, NSW 2007.

Andy Exon

Research and Planning

Curtin University of Technology

Library, Perth

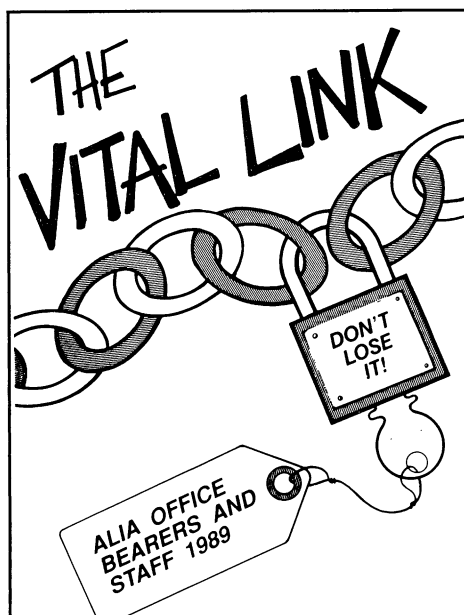


²Forecasting and Labour Economics Research Branch, Western Australian Department of Employment and Training. Occupation: Librarians, in *Occupational Supply/Demand in 1990—91*, 30 November 1988.

Correction

A mistake was made with the delegate registration cancellation date in the 5th National Library Technician Registration Brochure.

It should read: A cancellation fee of \$60.00 will apply if notice of cancellation is received any time after 25 June 1989. You may nominate a substitute delegate at no charge.



Now Available

Beware! The 1989 Vital Link will be available *on request only* this year. To obtain your copy please phone or write to the Australian Library & Information Association, 376 Jones Street, Ultimo NSW 2007. It's free to ALIA members.