

LETTERS

Dear Editor,

When Timothy Healy S.J. (President of the New York Public Library) was in Adelaide recently, he spoke at length about censorship and the threat to freedom of speech and expression — *and libraries* — posed by increasingly powerful moral pressure groups in the US. This has resulted in the attempt there by the Moral Right to cut Federal Government funding to libraries and institutions which stock material which is regarded as obscene. In the US such a move can, and will, be fought in the Supreme Court as infringement of The First Amendment, freedom of speech. But in Australia, we've got no Bill of Rights — if the moral crusaders succeed here, the ramifications could be disastrous.

I don't think there can be any doubt that some people may be badly affected by what they see or read, and most of us practise self censorship, blocking out things that disturb us too much. People have different levels of maturity and there will always be a small percentage who can't distinguish between fact and fantasy and act out what they see or read to varying degrees and at varying cost to society. But should we ban everything likely to trigger such acts, and where do we start?

The only solution to pornography, and bad art in general, is not increased

censorship but improved education, so that individuals can make more informed choices, and demand better erotica, if that is what they want. This is the liberal position upon which democracy (and libraries) are founded. It is a notion that the anti-porn lobby is unwilling to accept.

I believe that our existing censorship system is a good one, based as it is on the assumption that:

'adult persons are entitled to read and view what they wish: and that all persons are entitled to protection from exposure to unsolicited material that they find offensive'. The exceptions are child pornography, violent pornography, bestiality and how-to-do-it material on terrorism and drug manufacturing, which are banned outright because of the physical threat they pose to others.

It think it is up to librarians and others to make ourselves heard so that our censorship system stays as it is. It is also to be hoped that the individual states can be persuaded to revise their laws to conform with the Commonwealth Government. By independently banning X-rated material they have set an unfortunate precedent which undermines the philosophy upon which the whole system is based.

Timothy Healy testified before the US Congress against the moves by Senator Jessie Helms and the Moral Right to clamp down on pornography and decadence. He did so as a librarian, in the name of freedom of speech and expression. I think that as the Australian Library and Information Association it is important that we too make our position on censorship clear, whenever attempts are made, for whatever reasons, to tighten it.

Craig Brittain

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Dear Editor,

I am perturbed and dismayed at the apparent lack of concern from library professionals in Tasmania over the State Government's latest attack on library services. No longer are branch librarians within the 'integrated State Library system' permitted to order fiction books from other branches for their clients.

Librarians are well placed to know the value of fiction reading for promoting literacy skills, extending experience, expanding understanding and producing inventive and lateral thinking — qualities which our National Leader is emphasising as he calls for us to become a more 'clever country'. They immediately recognise the truth of Donald Horne's remark that 'you can't become a clever country without reading lots of books', because it isn't textbooks which produce innovation. It is today's fiction which becomes tomorrow's fact — just as yesterday's fiction is today's fact.

Conversely, the myopic claim made by our Minister for Education and the Arts that fiction books have recreational value only, is patently unequivocal rubbish. And yet hardly a voice is raised in protest at this blatant censorship.

Are librarians in this state just nervous about their jobs? Or have they been lulled by inertia into believing that library services are really irrelevant and that librarianship is not a worthwhile profession?

If this manifestly undemocratic manoeuvre is not prevented, they will be and it won't be. Tasmania will be ripe for the 'thought police' to take over. And that is one fiction turned fact that we can do without.

Helen M Dunford

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training is viewed as a lifelong activity.

To this end the Training Guarantee Scheme has recently been implemented. Employers must provide training, and it must be structured. This is a development which library workers should embrace for their own benefit. However, the Scheme sets minimums rather than optimums, and librarians still have greater need for professional development than the minimum level set down in the Scheme.

ALIA and professional development

ALIA has always held a responsibility for providing some professional development opportunities for its members, though the methods of provision have changed over the years. In the last decade there was a movement from centrally organised short courses to a decentralised system where divisions

organise their local program, with central assistance through the tendering system of nationally approved activities.

Packages

In response to the volatility of the professional and industrial environment, and the immutable geographic realities of the nation, ALIA has added the provision of *packages*. These are structured, site-independent courses focused on one topic of current interest per package. They may be used by individuals or self-led groups. The transfer of skills does not rely on face-to-face interaction with a presenter, but uses other media which may include print, video, teleconferencing. Methods of evaluation and certification are provided. Packages will conform with the requirements of the Training Guarantee Scheme. The first package will be released in early 1991. Not all topics lend themselves to this type of presentation, so nationally approved activities will continue.

1991 program

Preparation of packages and the tendering system of nationally approved activities require considerable ALIA resources — your resources. It is vital this effort is focused most productively to prepare topics of greatest relevance to members for both nationally approved activities and for the development of packages. The Professional Development Committee invites you to tell it your training needs, so that the program is tailored to members' needs within the resources available.

Survey

Please fill out the accompanying survey form (included as an insert with this issue) and send it **FREE POST** back to ALIA National Office. All responses will be analysed and the results will provide the direction for a dynamic and exciting program. It is an exciting time professionally, join in now.



of Apex. Published in 1990 by Buchan Laird International, 11 Fairlie Court, South Yarra, Vic 3141, and priced at \$35. (ISBN 0 7316 8227 0)

A bibliography of holdings on Prahran and bordering municipalities, compiled by John E Marsh, and revised and expanded by Sarah Chapman, is an 8-page listing of relevant works in the venerable Prahran Mechanics' Institute and Circulating Library, established 1954 and still going strong, to borrow a phrase. A handy checklist if you are into Prahran, East Melbourne, Hawthorn, Malvern, Richmond or St Kilda. \$1.60 post free from Prahran Institute, PO Box 1080, Windsor, Vic 3181. (No ISBN)

Visual impacts: contemporary Australian photography, edited by Max Pam, a beautifully-designed book, reproduces some of the startlingly contrasting work of five photographers and many images selected by Aboriginal communities in the After Two Hundred Years project. Captivating. Published in 1989 by AGPS Press at \$34.95. (ISBN 0 644 10597 6; AGPS catalogue number 89 1398 0)

Fire across the desert: Woomera and the Anglo-Australian Joint Project 1946-1980 by Peter Morton. Almost everything you wanted to know about Woomera but wouldn't have been told at the time. Five hundred and seventy-five pages of solid history, with copious illustrations and diagrams. Published by AGPS Press in 1989. (ISBN 0 644 06068 9)

Author and subject index to A history of Australian sport by Reet and Maxwell Howell.

The original history was published in 1987 as part of a 'reference series' and (aargh!) without an index. Frustrated owners of the work can now obtain, gratis, a subject and name index from Dr R Howell, Human Movement Studies, University of Queensland, St Lucia, Qld 4067.

From Yalata to the mount, by Ros Paterson, is a very useful listing of local histories of South Australia, arranged by county, and showing author, title, year of publication, availability and where appropriate, price. Appended is a directory of local history collection strengths in South Australian public libraries. Available from the Public Libraries Branch, Department of Local Government, 8 Milner Street, Hindmarsh, SA 5007, at \$10 (\$12.50 posted). (ISBN 0 7243 8704 8)

Personal action guide for the earth from the Commission for the Future. Are you environment-friendly? What can you do to help? Would you know an heirloom variety of seed if you fell over it? Do you mulch regularly? Lots of handy hints. Printed on 100 per cent recycled Australian paper donated by APPM. Published in 1989 by AGPS Press at \$3.50. (ISBN 0642 14655 1; AGPS cat. no. 89 31807)

A citation analysis of Australian road technology by M G Lay, concludes, inter ALIA, that citation analysis is a powerful tool for examining technology. Published in 1989 by the Australian Road Research Board as Research Report ARR 156 at \$16. (ISBN 0 86910 357 1; ISSN 0518-0728)



LETTERS continued from 10...

Margaret Simpson of Ballan, Victoria has written a long letter questioning career opportunities for newly qualified librarians.

Her main points are:

- very many libraries that she knows in Victoria are headed by ASO 3s (or lower) with no library qualifications;
- there seems to be minimal promotion possibilities within the librarian range, and few Lib1 or Lib2 positions are filled from within the Public Service;
- it is very difficult, even when qualified, to break out of the ASO into the Librarian range — first you need experience, but how do you get it?
- should ALIA have a Public Sector special interest group to look at such issues?

Tom McKeon comments:

'I have forwarded to Margaret a copy of the *Librarian — Position Classification Standards for the Australian Public Service (APS)*. These standards are used in classifying librarian positions by providing a framework of work levels. It specifies how libraries are organised and the duties that are expected to be done by librarians.

'Anyone faced with libraries being managed by non-professionals in the APS

should contact me and obtain a copy of these standards. These should be referred to a Professional Officers Association representative along with the duty statements of the position in question.

'With respect to the question of gaining employment as a librarian, the standards indicate that class 1 positions are expected to be filled by librarians with little or no library work experience. However, employers will select whoever they think is the best person available.'

What do other 'starting-out' readers think about Margaret's questions?

How to get your letter published!

- Keep it under 250 words.
- Make it legible. If handwritten, make it double spaced.
- Give a contact address and telephone number.
- Send it to: The Editor, *inCite*, Australian Library and Information Association, PO Box E441, Queen Victoria Terrace, ACT 2600.

Letters may be edited for space unless marked for publication in full or not at all.

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BUILDING RENOVATIONS

The National Library of Australia is currently undergoing major renovations, due for completion by December 1991, to improve public access and facilities and to upgrade fire prevention infrastructure.

Every effort is being made to minimise disruption during this period but some inconvenience cannot be avoided.

A 24-hour recorded message service has been established to provide day-to-day information about opening hours and location of services: (06) 262 1159

More detailed information may be obtained from the Readers Advisers on (06) 262 1266 or (06) 262 1434

