

FEED BACK

NSW public libraries

The Oakes Report and user pays

The Task Force to review the Oakes Report (The Local Government Rating Task Force) continues to sit, receive submissions and some delegations. The Library Council of NSW, together with many other bodies, has made a submission, and has also made a presentation to the committee, arguing strongly against the recommendation that libraries should charge membership fees.

The case included all the usual arguments that librarians and bodies representing libraries have marshalled in their letters and submissions to the Task Force (and I am pleased to report the Task Force commented on the volume of correspondence they have received on the subject).

The arguments appear to have been well received. But the most telling point was that for the past 2 years the Library Council has been carrying out consultations on the subject; that the outcome has been strong support for core library services to be without charge (including membership, borrowing of most materials, and standard reference services) with the option to charge for value-added services; and that the Minister for Arts, the Minister responsible for libraries, would be taking recommendations along those lines to Cabinet before the Task Force concludes its review and reports to the Minister for Local Government.

At this point it should be noted that in any case the Minister for Arts, as the minister responsible for libraries, does not have to pay attention to recommendations relating to libraries of a body reporting to the Minister for Local Government, unless the Minister for Local Government wishes to take up the Matter with his colleague or decides to take the matter to Cabinet.

While it is obviously premature to predict the outcome of the present activities, I think a few points can be made at this stage. The first is that it was in the knowledge that a 'User Pays' approach was becoming steadily more prevalent in all levels of government at least on the East Coast of Australia (as it has already become in the UK and USA) that the Library Council of NSW initiated the consultative process in order to achieve alterations to the Library Act which would more clearly and fully protect core library services and keep them free of charge.

Secondly, the ACLIS statement which differentiates between basic and value-added services, whatever its difficulties, was extremely useful in that consultative process, and will continue to be useful in the work being carried on in NSW to protect free access to core library services.

Thirdly, that while many librarians may have considered at the time that both ACLIS and, in NSW, the Library Council of NSW, were unnecessarily stirring up discussion on a subject which was best left alone, that action has now been demonstrated to be pre-emptive, and necessary. Had the groundwork not already been carried out with local government and with our Minister, to allow our Minister to present an alternative option with a solidly prepared case, to Cabinet, prior to consideration of the Oakes Report recommendations by the Minister for Local Government, then the Oakes Report recommendations would have represented a much more significant threat to free public library service in NSW than they currently do.

Alison Crook ■

RMIT issues AUSTROM

AUSTROM is a CD-ROM published by INFORMIT (Information Services from RMIT) in collaboration with the National Library of Australia. The disc includes eleven Australian bibliographic databases in the social sciences and education:

- AEI (Australian Education Index)
- APAIS (Australian Public Affairs Information Service)
- ARCH (Australian Architecture Database)
- ASCIS-CRA (Australian Schools Catalogue Information Service — Curriculum Resources Abstracts)
- AUSPORT
- CINCH (Australian Criminology Database)
- EDLINE

- FAMILY (Australian Family and Society Abstracts)
- IRAB (Index to Reviews of Australian Books)
- LEISURE
- WESTDOC

The first issue of the disc, which was published in June 1990 has been widely distributed. The second disc, now being pressed, will include two additional databases, Pinpointer and Home Economics Index. There is a possibility that additional databases will be included on the third disc for 1990.

Contact: Don Schauder, Institute Librarian, RMIT on (03) 660 2062. ■

Victorian Branch Student recruitment night: a night to remember!

Victorian Branch held a successful recruitment drive with library and information services students on Wednesday, 5 September 1990.

The aim of the evening was to introduce students to the organisation and benefits of membership of ALIA, to provide an opportunity for them to meet with their future employers and colleagues in an informal setting, and to encourage them to join up!

The evening function commenced with a panel representing various sectors of the profession, who spoke about their employment sector, their involvement in ALIA, the benefits of ALIA membership, and the types of programs and activities offered by their ALIA Section.

All ALIA Victorian Sections and Groups were asked to prepare a brief handout describing the aims of the Section and the programs and activities provided to members. These handouts proved to be a great success, especially as they could be used in class assignments. The evening closed with a social event where Association members could chat with the students.

Over 120 students from across the State attended. Close to 25 per cent joined ALIA on the spot, and further applications for membership are being received in a steady stream. What about it, other Branches? ■

Atlas of libraries

New publication from Queensland

Bill Kitson, Curator of the Mapping and Surveying Museum, Department of Lands, launched ALIA Queensland Branch's ALIA/Peter Pal *Atlas of Queensland libraries* on 17 October.

The joint celebration of Map Week and Library Week was an appropriate time for the publication of the atlas, with 'mud-maps' of libraries (except school libraries) throughout the State.

The seed money for production of the Atlas was donated by Peter Pal Library suppliers. A copy will be given to all State MP's to remind them of the importance of libraries in this State.

Copies are also available for sale from ALIA Queensland Branch, PO Box 318, Ferny Hills, Qld 4055 for \$20 each plus \$3 if posted. ■