

From Broome to Burnie

Feminist fortnight success

The inaugural Australian Feminist Book Fortnight (AFBF), which ran from 1-17 September last year, was every bit as successful as the organisers had hoped, despite a minuscule budget and a laughably short lead time. Soon after I was appointed to the position of National Coordinator, in early May, I described the Fortnight in our first press interview as 'an idea whose time had come', and the overwhelmingly enthusiastic response from publishers, writers, and book-lovers around the country amply demonstrated the truth of this.

The catch-phrase 'a celebration of women as writers and as readers' seemed to strike the right welcoming note, helping to allay the nervousness that was felt in some quarters about the placing of the word 'feminist' so squarely in the title. One of the aims of AFBF was indeed to reinstate what I facetiously called 'the new f word' as one we need not be self-conscious about using, and I feel that we were largely successful in that, media attention often focused on the *feminist* angle, which was occasionally trying but nevertheless afforded a marvellous forum for debate.

More people took part in the events of the Fortnight than could possibly be mentioned, beginning with a dynamic Management Committee based in Melbourne, spreading to all States and Territories via the representatives in each capital city who worked incredibly hard and with virtually no resources to organise readings, workshops, displays, tours, performances, book launches, literary dinners — you name it!

The work of these State reps was augmented by numerous regional representatives who got things going in their town or locality. Each State had its own program of events, and from 'mission control', an office donated for the duration by Collins Publishers, I watched in delighted amazement as women from Broome to Burnie launched into the celebration.

Probably the single greatest response was that of librarians to a small

notice placed in this magazine, *inCite*, in July, which produced a flood of letters and phone calls from libraries and schools. Some wanted catalogues and posters, others information on what was happening in their area; some called to say that they were organising displays of books by women writers, talks or readings. An unknown number of librarians just quietly went ahead and organised things off their own bat, some of which I heard of quite by chance.

My only regret was that we'd not had more time, to inform people in advance of the books in the AFBF Catalogue or to involve librarians more fully in the events of the Fortnight. Education institutions in particular could have been far more involved, given more time — but next time that won't be a problem.

Ah, 'next time'. Initially the plan was to make the Fortnight an annual event, but once '89 was over we had a good hard look at the logistics, the budgetary constraints, the likely media response to AFBF once the novelty was over, and above all the workload for volunteer organisers. We came to the conclusion that the option of going biennial was a more practical option for AFBF, making it something that people really look forward to with some hunger rather than just another invariable event on the annual literary calendar.

It was a decision made with some heartache, however, especially knowing how much people had enjoyed the first AFBF. Well, rest assured, the second AFBF in 1991 will be even better! And in 1992, we hope to attract the International Feminist Book Fair (also a biennial event) to Melbourne. We'll keep librarians posted through the pages of *inCite*.

Meantime, we would love to have your impressions, criticisms and suggestions on any aspect of AFBF, which can be addressed to the Australian Feminist Book Fortnight, 308 Victoria Street, Brunswick 3058. And to all those librarians who took part in whatever way: thank you!

Kate Veitch
National Coordinator
Australian Feminist
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Macquarie University moves to fully automated library

The Macquarie University's new automated library system was officially commissioned in February by the University's Vice-Chancellor Professor Di Yerbury.

The \$1 million UNIX based LIBS 100 system gives the University one of the most advanced library systems in Australia.

Not only does it provide fast access to books and reference material in the library through online catalogue enquiry, but it gives students and academic staff access to the online catalogue from their homes and offices via the Campus's local area network and dial-in facilities.

The LIBS 100 system was supplied and installed by CLSI Australia, one of the nation's major suppliers of library automation systems and the Australian distributor for CLSI Inc., the US based world leader in library automation systems.



A.L.I.A 1990
1st Biennial Conference
Perth - Western Australia
September 30-October 5, 1990
at the Perth Concert Hall