

Direct Line



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Executive
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Interlibrary loans and alternative systems of payment

On 22 November 1990 the Association convened a nationally representative meeting to consider alternative future systems of payments for interlibrary loans in Australia. This meeting accepted that any alternative system must be auditable, efficient and cost no more than the existing system for Australian libraries to use it. Additionally, it should be

based on data which is already being gathered through existing mechanisms.

The meeting resolved 'that ALIA, the National Library of Australia and the State Library of NSW be requested to hold discussions to explore the possible use of ABN and ILANET transaction data as the basis for the settlement of interlibrary loan payments; to investigate costs and benefits of this approach and to prepare proposals for the consideration of ALIA and ACLIS.'

Since that time, Warwick Cathro (National Library of Australia), Janette Wright (State Library of NSW) and I have met to consider how to progress this decision. Before any recommendation could be made on alternative systems, the group believed that more data was required in certain areas. In particular, estimates were required of the number of libraries likely to participate in any alternative system, the number of transactions involved and the proportion of these transactions that would involve payment. Also, it would be highly desirable to estimate the unit cost of processing payments by vouchers, by libraries and by the Association, and the likely costs for libraries and the Association of any alternative system.

The Association has contracted with Simon Hazelbrook to undertake this research on its behalf. Once this work has been

completed, a consultant will be required to develop the functional specifications for the proposed accounting system, draft a standard for the accounting data to be extracted from ILANET, ABN and other participating request systems, to estimate the initial and recurrent costs of the system required to process this accounting data, and to report on these matters to the Association, ACLIS, the National Library of Australia and the State Library of NSW by 30 September 1991. Janette Wright has subsequently produced a first draft of the consultant's brief and a broad specification of the requirements for the proposed accounting system.

An approach is being made to ACLIS to fund the work of this consultant.

It is expected that the group would be reporting on its findings during the last quarter of 1991. This report will then be considered by the Association, ACLIS, the National Library of Australia and the State Library of NSW, with a recommendation being put to the November meetings of the Association's General Council and ACLIS' National Council. Further progress reports will be made in *inCite* as more information comes to hand.

If you need more information on this investigation, please contact me on (06) 285 1877 or (008) 02 0071.

Public libraries and business information Impressions from the UK and Scandinavia

Jan Keith, of Wollongong City Library was the lucky beneficiary last year of an Albert Mainerd Scholarship awarded by the Local Government and Shires Associations. This scholarship offers senior local government officers the opportunity of studying selected aspects of interest to Local Government overseas or in Australia. It is awarded annually in turn to librarians, planners town clerks, health surveyors and engineers, with funding provided by the State Government, the LG and SA of NSW, the five professional associations, as well as Ampol which contributes \$1000 each year.

Jan's purpose was to look at information services to business and to local government provided by public libraries in the UK and Scandinavia. She visited 17 libraries in the UK and ten in Scandinavia as part of the tour, and made some other 'unofficial' visits to gain some general impressions of library services in these countries.

In her report, Jan summarised her findings as follows. Some of these seem very familiar in Australia, too:

Business information services

- Public libraries have a role to play in the provision of business information services to their local communities;
- It is practical to charge for such services. The concept is not free *or* fee but free *and* fee;

by Jan Keith



- The value of the library's role in business information is not fully appreciated by business. Further marketing and presentation is needed to improve the image of the library as an up-to-date and valuable source of information;
- Resources must be sufficient to support such a service. It is not realistic for all public libraries to hold the more sophisticated or expensive business information sources to meet every business need and it may be necessary to look at regional services or networks;
- Access to both free and fee-based services at State and national levels is important for public libraries especially in Australia where regional resources or networks may not be sufficient to meet every demand.

Local government information services

- The needs of local government for effective information provision have yet to be fully recognised by both local authorities and public libraries;
- Libraries need to target and market information services to local government in much the same way as business information services;
- A centralised information service can be a major information resource to both council and the community. Ready access by the public to the minutes of council meetings and general information about the council, its operation, laws and regulations, can ensure a regular two-way flow of information and a better informed community;
- Opportunities may exist for regional support collections to be developed in selected public libraries, which could form an effective back-up resource for other public libraries;
- In addition, public libraries might work with other organisations providing similar services eg. Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW, to develop better access to information already available and to avoid duplication of resources and effort.

* Contact Jan for any further information on (042) 27 7111