

Letters

Charging for libraries

Dear Editor,

Tim Bruwer (*inCite*, 25 February 1991) argues that the lesson to be learnt from the British Library's funding experience in recent years is that 'charges and entrepreneurial activities do not result in a well-funded library service'. I doubt that the BL would agree with his arguments.

Kenneth Cooper, the Chief Executive of the BL, gave a paper on 'Charging policy and revenue raising in the British Library' at the annual Conference of Directors of National Libraries in Stockholm on 26 August 1990. He said that the BL had been charging for services since it was established in 1973, and that as the real value of Government grants to the library had declined in recent years the pressure to generate additional revenues had focused corporate attention more closely on the scope for developing revenue earning services and on the underlying rationale for setting revenue targets and price levels. Addressing the issue of why the BL should charge, he argued that 'provided it is well managed, charging for services generates additional resources for the Library and so offers means of providing more and better services to our users and of exploiting more fully our rich collections of material. In addition, the discipline of operating in a commercial environment encourages greater responsiveness to the needs of users and provides a very clear incentive to staff both to innovate and to aim for excellence...'. The paper, a copy of which I am happy to provide to any interested reader, makes it clear that the BL's position continues to be that its broad core activities should be funded by the Exchequer rather than through other revenue raising mechanisms.

Cooper certainly did not agree that the BL has been disadvantaged by its charging and other revenue raising decisions. The concluding paragraph of his paper says:

'As a result of the revenue it raises the British Library is providing a much wider range of services than it possibly could otherwise, and we are continuing to look for new opportunities of providing value added services on a self financing basis. This has demanded the development of the kind of charging policy and practices described above. It has also meant, and continues to mean, very deliberate investment in the training and development of staff in

order to run activities of this kind successfully. This in its turn promises benefits more widely throughout the Library not simply in terms of the value added services the extra revenue enables us to sustain but also in terms of the attitudes successful revenue raising engenders — such as higher standards of expectation and achievement, closer attention to the needs of users, and so on. These are potentially good for all Library activities, whether we charge for them or not.'

The NLA experience has been similar to that of the BL. We are the second highest revenue generator in the world among national libraries (the BL being first), and expect to raise \$8.24 million in the 1990/91 financial year which is 24.7 per cent of the normal Government appropriation. Government funding and revenue raising figures are not directly linked in either the BL or NLA, but I have no doubt that both Governments pay careful attention to the initiatives taken by the two libraries to maximise their revenue potential and find additional sensible sources of funding. The experience in both libraries demonstrates the opportunity to undertake significant revenue raising activities without jeopardising basic dependence upon government funding for their broad operations.

Warren Horton
Director-General
NLA

Conspectus — a retort

Dear Editor,

While Eric Wainwright's defence to my latest attack on the Conspectus myth (Conspectus — a white elephant, *inCite* 12 (1), 11-12) is way off track, it demands a retort. The point of my letter was the discrepancy between the expenditure on conspectus recommended, as a subsidy, by the Review of Library Provision in Higher Education Institutions, and earlier statements on the likely cost of the Australian Conspectus database made by Eric himself and by the ACLIS Task Force on Conspectus. In that he does not even attempt to answer the point of my last letter, it may be assumed that the dramatic rise in conspectus costs is now admitted. Indeed, he now states that the recommended \$750 000 is intended only as an 'incentive' to libraries to participate, so that it may reasonably be assumed that the real costs of conspectus, if fully implemented, will be considerably greater!

The further suggestion that my comments may have been more considered if I had awaited the release of the full report of the Review, is not borne out by an examination of the text

of the report. There is nothing in it that could change anything I have written on conspectus. Indeed most of what the Review has to say on conspectus is just a rehash of the unsupported assertions of questionable benefits, although there is some brief acknowledgement in the main text and in the appendix on conspectus, of the views of the critics.

My only additional comment, having studied the full report, is that it is unfortunate that the Review chose to add the weight of its assumed authority to the conspectus methodology which so clearly does not have the track record to support it.

G G Allen
University Librarian
Curtin University

Library to close

Dear Editor,

The Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Library is to be closed in June this year. Established in 1928 it was built up over the last 20 years by the librarian Winifred Johns into an invaluable collection specialising in water supply, sewerage, drainage, civil engineering and town planning.

Without the library the engineering expertise of the Board cannot be maintained (so much for the clever country!). The result will surely be that Melbourne's water supply and sewerage collection will deteriorate. The Victorian Government may be cost-cutting but to cut back on the provision of a quality information service to a water supply utility is scandalous.

I urge members of ALIA to bring the strongest possible pressure to bear on the Victorian State Government to retain the library at its current level of service.

Coral Mary Ware
B.Soc. Sci. (Lib.)
RMIT

Oops... twice over!

Dear Editor,

Two apologies: the first to Neil MacLean of Macquarie University Library and star pinch-hitter at Information OnLine, for mis-spelling his name in my Front Line No 2. It's not that I am unaware of the subtle distinctions between MacLean, M'Lean, McLean and MacLlane; merely that I had managed to convince myself, apparently incorrectly, that I had seen it spelt thus in the program. The error was pointed out to me by someone other than Neil himself, who is far too gracious to complain about the failings of this pair sassenach.

My second apology is to Ted Flowers, and indirectly, to Jim Dwyer. In my 1990 Front Line on the

Presidency, I made this statement:

'As incoming President, (and one who incidentally "lost" two previous elections, both to excellent candidates — John Brudenall and John Balnaves)...

Ted has written to me to say

'My admittedly faulty recollection is that I lost to John Balnaves, and you to John Brudenall. Through my professional life I became accustomed to colleagues taking credit for my successes. You are the only one, as far as I know, who has taken over one of my failures...'

Touché! And my apologies to Ted; to the other candidate to whom I lost a Presidential election, Jim Dwyer, and to John Balnaves, who won his election against a candidate much more worthy of his mettle than I.

John Levett

Vote of thanks

Dear Editor,

I would like to thank all my friends, colleagues and supporters who voted for me to represent them on the Board of Education. Although I wasn't elected to the Board, I will continue to work towards creating opportunities for professional education and development in the Northern Territory.

Ann Alderslade □

In Brief

Duplicate maps

The Library and Information Service of WA has a list of duplicate and discarded maps available for distribution to libraries. The selection is very varied. For a copy of the list contact: David Whiteford, Manager: Map Collections, Library & Information Service of WA, Alexander Library Building, Perth Cultural Centre, Perth, WA 6000 or ph. (09) 427 3206, fax (09) 427 3256. □

Distribution of ALIA General Council papers

All members are reminded that Council has taken decisions, over the past 4 years, on the distribution of these papers:

- General Council agendas and papers are forwarded to General Council; Chairperson, Board of Education; Branch, Regional Group and National Section Secretaries (GC 87/90);
- General Council agendas listing contents with short abstracts are forwarded to the Editor of *ALJ*; Section State Group and Special Interest Group Secretaries (GC 88/90);

Oral History Association and the recollection of conflict

The 7th Biennial Conference of the Oral History Association of Australia will be held 20-22 September at the University of Queensland. The types of conflict to be discussed at the conference include professional issues and power groups, industrial disputes, wars, Maoris and Aborigines and others. Enquiries and offers of papers, demonstrations, exhibitions, presentations, performances or workshops and enquiries should be sent as soon as possible to OHAA National Conference Committee, c/- PO Box 282, Nambour, Qld 4560. □

- Branch Secretaries receive two copies of the papers (GC 89/90).

This distribution is seen as a compromise between effective communication with members and the number of copies needed so that members can contribute to the decision making processes of the Association.

The General Council will meet on the following dates during 1991:

22/23 March (Canberra)

11/12 June (Sydney)

22/23 November (Canberra). □

NSW Agriculture & Fisheries

The Head Office library and library network support group of NSW Agriculture & Fisheries will be relocating from Sydney to Orange in December 1991.

The following positions will become vacant throughout 1991 and recruitment in Orange will proceed as vacancies occur.

Expressions of interest are invited for any of these positions.

Application forms will be sent in response to such expressions of interest when recruitment action commences.

Position	Grade	Salary
Departmental librarian	Division 2	\$43,994—\$47,368
Deputy librarian	Senior 2	\$34,115—\$36,367
Technical services librarian	Senior 1	\$32,065—\$33,089
Systems librarian	Librarian	\$23,707—\$31,040
Reference officer	Library Technician	\$24,186—\$26,283
Serials officer	Clerical Assistant	\$9,304—\$19,598
Data entry officer	Typist	\$9,893—\$19,589

Inquiries: David Hawkins (02) 217 5006

Correspondence should be addressed to Librarian, NSW Agriculture & Fisheries, PO Box K220, Haymarket 2000.

BOOK RELEASE

"VICTORIA SURFACE WATER INFORMATION TO 1987"

Published by the Rural Water Commission of Victoria

Orders for the publication "Victorian Surface Water Information to 1987" are now being taken.

This well presented 4 volume publication contains a summary of surface water data (including water quality information) collected by the Hydrographic Section of the Rural Water Commission, the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works, State Electricity Commission of Victoria, the La Trobe Valley Water and Sewerage Board and the Dandenong Valley and Western Port Authority.

The areas of Victoria covered by the 4 volumes are as follows:

- Volume 1 - Eastern Victoria, south of the Great Dividing Range
- Volume 2 - Western Victoria, south of the Great Dividing Range
- Volume 3 - Eastern Victoria, north of the Great Dividing Range
- Volume 4 - Western Victoria, north of the Great Dividing Range

Individual volumes are available at \$125 each, or the 4 volume sets at \$500.

Cheques which must accompany orders, should be made payable to the Rural Water Commission.

Enquiries and orders should be directed to the Chief Hydrographer, Rural Water Commission of Victoria, 590 Orrong Road, Armadale, Victoria 3143 (Telephone (03) 508 2300, Facsimile (03) 508 2686)