

# Who's Where

**M**ARY BAKER has joined The University Co-op Bookshop Library Services Division as their Library Consultant. Mary has a strong background in NSW Specials, including being the youngest recipient of the Maria Gemenis Award for contribution to special librarianship in NSW. She was formerly with Bennett Ebsco Subscription Service, with a short consultancy at the Department of Corrective Services in between Ebsco and Co-op.

**Paul Mercieca** has recently joined Dandenong Valley Regional Library Service as Reference, Information and Network Librarian. Paul was previously Reference Librarian at the Australian Catholic University, Mercy Campus. He is currently working on his thesis for Master of business (Information Technology) at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University.

Linda Beveridge, Director

Defence Information Services has been selected to undertake the Senior Women in Management Program. She is currently working with Department of Health Housing and Community Services, Policy Development Division. The Director Defence Information Services position is now held by Denise Bird.

**Robyn Jenés** has been appointed to the position of Senior Information Librarian in the Baillieu Library, University of Melbourne. Previous to this, Robyn was the Subject Librarian for Education at the Humanities and Social Sciences Library (formerly Main Library), Monash University. Robyn has also worked as a library assistant at the SEC Technical Library, the Institute of Public Affairs and the Law Library, Monash Library and has taught in the areas of Early Childhood Education, Language and Children's Literature. Robyn's most recent research has been in the area of adolescent subculture. ■



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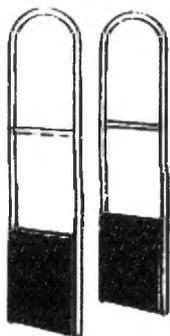
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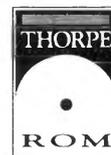
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# Australian Tertiary Libraries: Issues for the 1990s

*Robert Barnes reviews this important new compilation*

**T**HIS COLLECTION of essays, edited by the ANU University Librarian, Colin Steele, and including contributions from two other ANU librarians, Michael Evans and Joan Jensen, should be read by everyone who cares about this country's future.

We are all told regularly that information is the key to Australia's survival. These essays, while in places veiled in the decent obscurity of library prose, reveal all too clearly our patchy record in collecting that information down to the present. Although they are not entirely pessimistic in tone they do not make this reader much more confident for the future.

The problems, of course, are partly financial. Michael Evans shows that average academic book prices, in Australian dollars, went up by about two and a half times in the 1980s, and journal subscriptions by about three times.

Not surprisingly, most academic libraries were buying fewer books at the end of the decade than at the beginning, and had cancelled more journal subscriptions than they had placed—and this although the number of books and journals published in all fields had increased, and the use made of the libraries had increased even more.

The solution, despite certain enthusiastic noises made in this collection, does not yet lie in the 'E(lectronic)-Library'. Colin Steele quotes the *University of Melbourne Review of Library Services, 1991*: 'There is no doubt that print materials are, and will remain for the immediate future, the major source of information for the majority of Library users.'

One cannot see this situation changing greatly, so long as the commercial interests of publishers and the politics of academic publishing combine to preserve it. Also, for many areas of research, the available electronic texts (produced of course by commercial publishers) are not suitable for much more than word searches, and sometimes cost as much as the same texts in print.

Nor does the solution yet lie in the 'Distributed National Collection'. For some, this term is simply a way of indicating where our existing library strengths are. Others, including Colin Steele, believe it should be a more positive plan for developing particular areas in particular libraries (and quite possibly discouraging other libraries from developing the same areas).

We can hardly be optimistic that universities will quickly agree to any such plan (or the government for that matter, when it is called on to fund at least one decent collection in Australia for each area of knowledge, not to mention the costs of making that collection available to the rest of the country).

Nor, finally, does the solution lie in the National Library of Australia. Whereas the university libraries at least try to meet the needs of their immediate clientele, the National Library is still trying to find its clientele. It has never had the resources to develop a 'universal' collection on anything like the scale of the British Library, and its *Collection Development Policy, 1990*, finally abandons any such ideal.

Colin Steele notes that the National Library now spends little more on acquisitions than the largest university libraries do, and quite justifiably labels its policy as a 'patchwork'.

*Australian Tertiary Libraries*, then, does not give simple answers to the problems it discusses (and it discusses many more of them than this review has mentioned, including new problems created by the Unified National System). What it does make clear is that unless these problems are seen as urgent matters of national policy and not the in-house chatter of librarians, then we have no chance of climbing out of our rut.