

Changes at the AGPS

Peter Clayton explains the liaison between the AGPS and ACLIS and what is coming out of their discussion

AGPS and the library profession talk to each other at the Australian Government Publications Service/ACLIS Liaison Committee (AALC), a committee that hadn't met for so long—over two years—that many people had forgotten it existed. However, a meeting was held in October last year and another is planned for about the time this report appears, so it looks as if AGPS wants to hear from librarians again after all. The reason we were given for the long delay was the substantial structural change occurring within AGPS, which has now divided publishing from sales. There had also been a big turnover in personnel, and what was described to as a 'tremendous cultural change' with AGPS now talking about its 'need to listen to clients.' No doubt this in part led to the meeting, AGPS is also attempting to build links with the states. It has already established a joint venture in Tasmania, including a joint bookshop.

One of the major items of discussion was the deposit and free issue schemes operated by AGPS. There is no threat to these schemes, even though AGPS is now self-funding, because they are directly supported by government appropriation. AALC was advised that the Minister for Administrative Services is currently considering extension of the free scheme to the new universities (but excluding Bond and university colleges). If approved, Librarians of these institutions should write to AGPS requesting membership, as it is not automatic. Other scheme items discussed included late receipt of shipments and non-receipt of some items; non-supply of binders for loose-leaf material (if not received with the first

issue of a new title, 'it is best to assume there will not be one forthcoming'); and delay in the distribution of the Gazette, because of its inclusion in batched consignments. ACT legislation and bills are not included under the schemes.

AGPS agreed to prepare and circulate a statement on its present policy on the use of paper of various quality. This statement has since been received, and will be discussed at the next meeting of AALC. AGPS has a 'philosophy of matching paper types to end products... Much of government information is ephemeral and does not warrant being printed on the more expensive permanent paper.'

Permanent paper is, however, used for Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, the Journals of the Senate and Votes and Proceedings of the House of Representatives. Hansard was not mentioned in this short statement, copies of which are available on request from the author of this report. The librarian members of AALC believe that permanent paper should be used for all the major publications of record.

Commonwealth legislation is already available on CD-ROM through a joint venture with Diskrom. AGPS is considering possible electronic publication of a number of other titles, including the Commonwealth Government Directory on diskette. The Directory itself is currently being re-examined, and AGPS hope to provide increased information about agency functions, a reintroduced personal names index and an indication of the gender of those listed. AGPS hopes to set up a 'Library Focus' unit later in 1992 as 'a place of last resort for librarians', with a role rather like that of an ombudsman. In other words, if you've received the run-around elsewhere, try here!

AGPS has purchased Dynix to help them produce a microfiche catalogue, fortnightly list and annual catalogue. However, they encountered problems in transferring data from their old system onto Dynix, and also in producing the fiche catalogue. Other problems, such as duplicate runs of entries—especially annoying with the Parliamentary Papers—were reported to AGPS at the meeting. The use of the Dynix system to produce additional services such as data searching and an online service is under consideration. A range of useful issues, then, which certainly justified the reappearance of this committee.

The ABS Library Consultative Group

Judith Miller and an important development in liaison

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) encourages feedback from users of its products and services. Librarians are major customers of the ABS and provide an avenue for the greatest public access to ABS statistics.

The ABS Library Consultative Group (LCG) was formed in mid-1991 after discussions between the Bureau and the Australian Council of Library and Information Services (ACLIS). The group will inform the ABS about their needs and priorities, advise on the distribution of new products and generally support ABS initiatives aimed at improving access to services and products.

Members of the group include librarians who are specialists in the use of government publications and ABS publications in particular, or who are involved in the provision of government information to the public. They represent a variety of library sectors: research, public, special, school. Meetings are held twice yearly and it is intended that membership will remain relatively stable in order to develop a degree of continuity and expertise within the group.

The inaugural meeting was held in August 1991. As part of a full agenda, ABS outlined progress with its Library Extension Program. This program involves the ABS visiting and conferring with librarians and monitoring the use of ABS products in libraries throughout Australia. Its main aim is to ensure that the community has adequate access to ABS information. Already under this national program visits have been made to research, tertiary, parliamentary and public libraries in most states to discuss matters of mutual concern. Seminars and workshops in the use of ABS data are being held regularly by the ABS for reference librarians.

A second meeting has just been held. Issues for discussion included ABS Electronic Products, among them the new PC AUSSTATS and the Census 91 output.

The ABS LCG is an advisory group only, but the ABS has already acted upon advice tendered at the inaugural meeting.

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