

Making news...

Selected reprints from newspapers and magazines in recent months

UK libraries urge clarity on terrorism criteria

Times Higher Education Supplement, 11 November, Anna Fazackerley

The UK Government's new Terrorism Bill could criminalise researchers and librarians unless amendments are made, libraries in the UK have warned. The legislation states that it would be an offence to buy, sell, distribute or lend terrorist publications, but library organisations have criticised the wording of the Bill, arguing that it is too ambiguous about what constitutes a terrorist publication and noting that something could be regarded as legal one week and then, in the light of subsequent events, be regarded as illegal, thereby leaving the library open to prosecution.

The 'improbable spook'...

Canberra Times, 9 November

Michael Thwaites, who has died in Canberra aged 90, was an improbable spook; a poet who became director of counter-espionage in the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation. Joining ASIO in 1950, Thwaites stayed for 20 years until 1971. Later that year he became assistant parliamentary librarian in Canberra. His specific duty at the library was to run, and upgrade where possible, the research service, building on the work that Allan Fleming had begun during his time in the position.

Restorers can log on

Gold Coast Sun, 9 November

THE State Library of Queensland has launched 'The Garage' — a new online resource offering wider access to its extensive collections of rare, classic car restoration manuals and images. Classic car collectors, restorers and enthusiasts throughout Australia and beyond can now take advantage of an easy-to-use search facility allowing them to locate and request maintenance and repair information for pre-1970 vehicle models. Located at <http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/garage>, The Garage includes information from many useful and hard-to-find manuals, for example manufacturers' official repair manuals and manuals from technical publishers, such as Chilton and Haynes.

Local govts are 'underfunded and undervalued' by the big end of town

The Canberra Times, 9 November

More than 600 delegates from Australia's local governments declared they were underfunded and undervalued and wanted formal recognition in the Constitution so they could better provide services to their

communities. Addressing the rally, Australian Local Government Association president Paul Bell said councils needed better financial assistance as they struggled to keep up with the demands of their communities. The practice of cost-shifting by state and federal governments — which had seen those tiers hand over the task of providing community services and infrastructure such as libraries, road maintenance and child and aged care to local government — was costing councils between \$500million and \$1.1billion each year.

News bytes

Gold Coast Bulletin, 9 November

Microsoft has signed a deal which will see 100 000 books from the British Library scanned and put online in 2006. Under the arrangement readers will be able to search about 25 million pages of material without having to visit the library in London or pay any fee. The deal comes at a time when search engine Google is being dogged by controversy and threats of legal action over plans to create its own digital library by scanning millions of books. Publishers have claimed Google's plans will breach their copyright, however, the Microsoft/British Library deal will only cover books that are out of copyright.

Google presses on with Print

The Australian, 8 November

Google has launched its controversial effort to digitise millions of books for online viewing. The internet search giant says the initial collection will include only public domain works that don't have copyright protection in an apparent effort to ease concerns that have led to legal challenges.

The company did not say how it would respond to issues of copyright if it pressed on with plans to offer online versions of more current books. Google Print has two components: the library project in co-operation with several key US and British libraries, and the publisher project, which aims to offer additional books. Google Print product manager Adam Smith indicates in the Google blog that the company hopes to work with publishers to get permission to display their works.

Since Google made its announcement, Yahoo and Microsoft have announced similar plans but they say they will not violate copyright.

Hidden treasure

Melbourne Yarra Leader, 7 November, Milestone

One of Melbourne's oldest public organi-

sations is celebrating its 165th birthday this year but few people know it even exists. The Melbourne Athenaeum Library, hidden above the Melbourne Athenaeum Theatre in Collins Street, has been a place for reading pleasure for generations. The library was established as part of the Melbourne Mechanics Institute, which in 1873 was renamed The Melbourne Athenaeum. For information on library subscriptions, ph 03 9650 3100.

Honouring the women in black

Courier Mail, 5 November, Marg O'Donnell

The Supreme Court of Queensland Library is launching *A Woman's Place: 100 Years of Queensland Women Lawyers*. This book, edited by Susan Purdon, a partner at Hopgood Ganim, and Supreme Court Librarian Aladin Rahemtulla, commemorates the centenary of the enactment of the *Legal Practitioners Act 1905*, which allowed women to practise law in Queensland. It gives 52 biographies of leading legal women.

Art provides a rare vision

Geelong Advertiser, 5 November

They sat forgotten in a British barn for decades, but now a rare set of paintings by George Raper, a midshipman on the First Fleet flagship *Sirius*, has emerged to shed new light on Australia at the time of the First Fleet. The collection of 56 watercolours has been bought by Australia's National Library from David Moreton, the Earl of Ducie.

Discovered during a routine inspection of a Gloucestershire barn in 2004, the paintings had been passed down through generations of the Moreton family, unsigned and undated, their significance unrecognised. Because they had remained out of sight since at least World War II, the colours in the paintings were 'astonishingly vibrant'. Library collections curator Martin Terry said the Moreton family could have sold them for a fortune at auction, but decided they were historically important and began negotiations with the library.

[Some of the drawings will be shown in the *Treasures* exhibition, soon to open in Canberra and scheduled to tour every capital city. Similar stories in most major papers.]

Libraries must learn to evolve

Townsville Bulletin, 4 November

The Townsville City Council debate about the worth of installing Xbox computer games into the libraries was good for a headline and a colourful quote but did little to further social debate. Libraries are

an important community service and always have been. Unless they evolve and change to meet people's needs, however, they are in danger of becoming a social dinosaurs. Libraries have been particularly good at keeping up with technology. Even the smallest of facilities offers free internet access, not to mention a range of literary and educational services for people with disabilities and special needs. It is fair to say that the introduction of XBoxes will raise eyebrows among those who take a more conventional view of libraries. The enjoyment of books and dissemination of information will always remain a library's core function, but even the best-stocked facility in the world is useless unless people feel comfortable going inside. Councillor Fay Barker is probably right when she scoffs at the suggestion that after 10 minutes on an Xbox the teenagers will pick up a copy of Dickens. But that's not what it is about. The Xbox program is designed to create a habit among young people of using libraries. It says to them that libraries are interested in what interests them and exposes them to the many facilities on offer. Xbox usage is limited and the games available are suitable for all ages, blunting the argument that the council is luring kids from sporting ovals to the couch. Libraries, like all services, need to adapt to change and 13-year-old Max Koch summed it up best when he said without XBoxes, libraries were boring.

Other reports of the Council debate referred to here were published in the *Townsville Bulletin*, 3 November, *Courier Mail* 4 November.

Freedom of incarceration

The Australian, 2 November, Brendan O'Keefe

University students, academics and their respective national unions, without even seeing the colour of the federal Government's anti-terror legislation, fear they have witnessed its intentions this year and can guess at the implications for academic freedom. Many in higher education fear that the new laws will stifle debate and could compromise sources of information. They fear they will be under surveillance as they borrow books from libraries, buy books over the internet, and teach and research sensitive topics. The problem with the new laws is that the definitions of terror, terrorists and terrorism are slippery and what it may mean to incite or encourage violence is equally ill defined.

Art renders pioneer's odyssey

North West News, 2 November

Renowned Samford artist Janet Skinner has created a masterpiece which captures the jour-

ney taken by another famous local, Pine Rivers pioneer Charles Thomas Williams. Over the next two years the exhibition *Charles Thomas Williams, The Journey* will tour local and regional galleries, museums and libraries throughout Queensland. Albany Creek Library launched the exhibition on 5 November and the exhibition will continue until 1 December, when it will tour to other libraries.

For information about destinations, tour dates and tuition phone Janet Skinner on 0438 123 993.

Libraries' book figures dip

PA News, 1 November

London libraries have 2.6 million fewer books than when Labour came to power. In 1997-8, the total book stock of public libraries across the capital stood at 18.2 million but by 2003-4, the most recent figures available, the total had dropped to just under 15.6 million. The figures came in a Commons written reply from UK junior culture minister David Lammy to Liberal Democrat Sarah Teather (Brent E).

Online the last word in libraries

Courier Mail, 25 October, Michael Bazeley

A consortium backed by the internet giant Yahoo has launched an ambitious effort to digitise classic books and technical papers and make them available to anyone interested. Called the Open Content Alliance, one of its first projects will be to digitise the 18 000-title collection of classic fiction and non-fiction American books owned by the University of California, the group said. The announcement of the consortium comes amid furious debate about a similar project called Google Library, in which the tech giant is scanning and digitising millions of books at selected libraries. The members of the Open Content Alliance, however, say they will only scan copyrighted material if they have the permission of the rights-holders and will offer complete texts. Google intends to digitise material regardless of its copyright status, and will only allow viewing of excerpts. See <http://opencontentalliance.org>.

Amazon.com, the Internet retailer, also operates a massive book digitising

project. But its goal is to make the material available to customers to help spur sales.

Porn filtering back on the agenda

The Australian, 11 October, Simon Hayes

Internet content regulation had dropped off the agenda in a world more concerned with terror attacks than pornography, but there is a growing push across party political and conservative/radical divides to increase regulation. Filtering is being suggested at both delivery and ISP levels. On one hand, filtering is of limited use, especially in peer-to-peer networks, and denies users of the web access to inoffensive material or material they have a legal right to view if they wish. On the other, some political and conservative groups have demanded children be protected from pornography and cite its deleterious social effects.

AusWeb05

Computers in Libraries, October 2005, 25(9):45 Terence K Huwe

Summary of his visit as speaker to Australasian World Wide Web Conference (AusWebOS; <http://ausweb.scu.edu.au>) on the Gold Coast, the second-longest-running international conference that focuses on the web. AusWeb brings together librarians, technologists, social scientists, and entrepreneurs to discuss the broad issues that are shaping the web's evolution. As a W3 Consortium conference, AusWebOS's focus was on the 'big picture' of the web's growth. Its four paper tracks were Technical and Standards; Education and Training; eCommerce/eBusiness/Online Marketing; and Society, Information and the Web. Online repositories were a hot topic. Joanna Richardson, a librarian/programmer at Griffith University in Brisbane, presented 'Building Bridges between Learning Management Systems and Library Content Systems'. Libraries are using the e-learning environment to rethink how users interact with content, she wrote. In order to achieve a convergence between different streams of design — both library and IT-driven — each group needs to know what the other is doing. ■

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