

# Letters

## Join-use statement

IT IS unfortunate that the LAA Executive Committee has chosen to call for members' comments on its draft policy statement on joint-use libraries (*Incite*, 4 July 1980) by 8 August, one week before the AACOBS National Workshop on Joint-use Libraries which is to be held at LaTrobe University on 14-15 August.

It would surely have been appropriate to have deferred the date for comment until after the workshop, which will bring together a wide range of people from librarianship, education, and state and local government with experience in the planning, development and operation of joint library services. It is to be hoped that the Executive will consider the outcomes of this workshop before adopting a final statement of policy on this issue.

So far as the document itself is concerned, I was disappointed both by the prevailing negative tone and by the inference (through omission rather than commission) that school/community libraries represent the sum total of joint-use schemes.

There are now at least two TAFE Community Colleges successfully operating joint college/public library services (at Queens-town in Tasmania and Murray Bridge in South Australia) and, as the more avid of your readers will know, a major joint-use library, costing close to \$2 million, is now under construction at Noarlunga, south of Adelaide (*Incite*, 2 May 1980).

The case that the provision of separate library services is more advantageous to the clientele than the provision of a joint service may well be strongly supported, as the Executive states, but it is far from being one of the eternal verities. Proper evaluative studies, looking at both service effectiveness and cost efficiency, are undoubtedly needed.

However, to provide meaningful results these studies should concentrate on those projects, such as Boronia, Queenstown and Noarlunga, in which buildings and services have been planned from the start as joint-use operations. They should also be carried out by people with relevant research credentials who understand how, why and what they are measuring, and have not prejudged the issue either way.

*A.J. Brown*

SA Department of Further Education  
The Executive decided to release the draft policy statement on joint-use libraries, the pros and cons of releasing it before and after the AACOBS seminar were discussed.

It was decided to call for comment before the AACOBS seminar so that the seminar could have the advantage of the responses received from members.

It is intended to provide the seminar's organisers with a synopsis of the views expressed. In turn, the Association will be able to take into account the outcomes of the AACOBS discussions in modifying and adapting the draft policy statement.

The statement is still only a draft, and will come before the November meeting of General Council for final consideration, at which time it is hoped that a wide range of inputs will be available to councillors to assist them in making a final decision.

*Gordon Bower*, Executive Director, LAA

## Where has professionalism gone?

A FEW nights ago I attended the Annual Meeting of the Victorian Section of the UCLS. The subject of the talk was 'The Information Industry and the Librarian'. The speaker Ann Wilson plus a panel.

I realise that I should have made my comments at the meeting, and I apologise to its organisers, speakers and audience for not doing so. Put it down to tiredness and despair if you wish.

I really was very disturbed indeed about the whole tone of the meeting, perhaps the more so because of the MA students enrolled in the Graduate School of Librarianship at Monash were attending their first professional meeting after some seminars about the professional association. There was not much professionalism in evidence.

Most of the talk and discussion centred on the fact that the new technology, information-brokers, information-sellers etc were taking over, and soon we would all be redundant. There were even doleful statements that the computerised services were more efficient, and videotapes would make library slide collections obsolete. And some statements that one of the troubles was that the computer-based information services were getting cheaper and would undercut us!

I confess that I thought that the main speaker, Ms Ann Wilson was being deliberately provocative and I waited for the panel of commentators to answer back. But, Denis Richardson excepted, the answers did not convince me.

It is true that the new technologies are making possible all sorts of new and exciting informational services. Videotapes of works of art may be better than slides, viewdata may be a very useful service, and if computers succeed in reading printed papers for the blind then that is marvellous. I cannot understand how a professional librarian can fail to welcome anything that enlarges our store of, and access to, information in all its forms.

Because the business of a professional librarian is to collect, select, organise and make available to every individual who needs them, the records of yesterday and today. What is important is the service, which means, of course, the collection too. In other words the library matters: librarians are only important, and will only survive, if they are essential to that service.

## With good wishes . . .

THE following letter was sent on 11 July 1980 to the President of the Library Association of Australia, Denis Richardson, from Harrison Bryan, Director-General, National Library of Australia:

May I make a more formal but none the less sincere response to your letter of congratulation on my appointment as Director-General of the National Library of Australia.

I greatly appreciate the good wishes of my colleagues and especially those conveyed by you as representing the Library Association of Australia.

It is quite clear to me that the professional association has a most important role to play in the development of more effective library and information services in Australia, the end to which I hope the National Library will continue to work also.

I look forward with pleasure and enthusiasm to the continuance and strengthening of the bonds which, through the Association, unite librarians of all kinds in Australia in the pursuit of this objective.

I am not really saying anything that is new, but that was a large meeting, and I had a distinct impression of confusion. May I suggest that before we despair we ponder the following questions:

- What do we really mean by information? Do we mean everything in the library? Or are we forgetting a lot of material and a lot of users?
- We have been in the business of organising and interpreting the record and extracting information for a long time, what can we contribute in the technological revolution and how may it help us to do our job better?
- In a capitalist society like ours many of those in the information/communication industry are there to make profits. (They always have been — eg, publishers, film-makers, record firms, TV manufacturers.) What does that fact mean to us in 1980? Above all does it really mean that we should be like them?
- The new technology may certainly alter the organisation, distribution, and availability of information; but what will it do to the quality of that information?
- Are the mass media going to become more persuasive, more dominating? Will an individual have fewer sources to choose from in his search for the truth of the matter? And what will that mean to him and to society?

There is at present a tremendous emphasis on the users, on studying them and on finding out what they want. (Perhaps what they need matters more?) While not wishing to deny the importance of user studies, may I put in a plea that we, who should be the experts on the materials in libraries, pay more attention to the content, organisation and availability of those materials.

In conclusion let me repeat some words (slightly amended) that I wrote long ago (they may even be some comfort, but not I trust the kind that leads to complacency).

More loud, more strident grows the  
syndicate,  
The satellite, the TV, Telecom —  
More urgent is our task to cater for  
The individual, not the audience. . .'

*Jean P. Whyte*, Monash University



**Footscray  
Institute of  
Technology  
Library**

*Seminar*

*Information for Sport  
and Recreation in  
Australia:*

*Problems and solutions*

Friday 21 November 1980

This national seminar is supported by the Department of Home Affairs and follows the development of the AUSIRC proposal. It will be of interest to coaches, recreation personnel, librarians, academics and anyone else concerned with the problems of access to information in sport and recreation in Australia.

Gilles Chiasson, Manager of the Canadian Sport Information Resource Centre (SIRC) will be the keynote speaker.

Participation limited to 60 people. Cost: \$30 — includes lunch and copy of the proceedings.

Enrolment forms available from: Gerard Peguero, Seminar Co-ordinator, Footscray Institute of Technology Library, PO Box 64, Footscray, Vic 3011. Phone: (03) 688 4274. Telex: FITLEX 36596.