Letters

'Unsafe for women'

It was interesting to read Kathleen Gawler's letter in *Incite* (1 May, no 7) regarding employment of women librarians.

It is true that women librarians were not employed in the Public Library of Western Australia (now State Library) but this was due to the belief of the principal Librarian Dr J.S. Battye that it was unsafe for women staff to go home alone from the Library at night.

The Library was open from 10am to 10pm from Monday to Saturday and with the small staff at the period shortly after the war there were at most three, and sometimes only two members on duty on the evening shift.

The area was not a pleasant one, nor were some of the users of the building. Dr Battye's protective attitude no doubt seems old fashioned but he did not discriminate against women in the usual sense.

I was appointed as State Archivist, to open the newly established Archives Branch of the Library in March 1945. The post was advertised with male and female salary rates (women in the public service then had a lower basic wage) and there were applicants of both sexes. As the Archives was only to be open during office hours there was no problem over the appointment of a woman.

The number of women in the Archives Branch had increased to five by 1954 when, following Dr Battye's death, the Public Library was taken over by the Library Board and the staff structure reorganised.

Mollie Lukis
Nedlands, WA

SALSSAH needs you

WE WOULD LIKE to thank those 18 libraries that have commented on the proposal to publish the SALSSAH card file on microfilm, as described in *ROD news* no8 and *For information* 315/81.

Unfortunately response to date has not been sufficient to allow the National Library to judge whether or not to proceed with the publication of the SALSSAH card file and, if further comments are not received in the near future, the Library will have to examine the justification for allocating resources to maintain this SALSSAH card file as a location tool.

If your library has any interest in the provision of locations from the SALSSAH card file; either through a published file or through the National Library's Loan and Copy Service, please provide us with the following information:

1 Name and address of library.
2 Is your library interested in purchasing the SALSSAH card file on microfilm?
3 Would your library buy the film at $250 approx?
4 Any additional comment.

If you consider that this file is not necessary please inform us.

Replies should be addressed to: Principal Librarian, Bibliography, National Library of Australia, Canberra, ACT 2600.

Teaching English to immigrants

THE article by Lidio Bertelli on 'Libraries and the Non-English Speaking Immigrant' in the May 1981 issue of *The Australian Library Journal* raises aspects of significance to anyone such as myself involved in the field of teaching of English as a second language.

His discussion merits more expansive comments and correction than space permits, so I shall confine myself to expressing some personal reactions to the most pertinent points.

For me, the literacy levels issue is one requiring caution especially when the interpretation of statistics is involved. Weeks or years may elapse before the immigrant may choose to exert the adult prerogative of seeking help with literacy or English language needs. National groups may also vary in their desire to seek assistance. In these circumstances librarians and educators can only plan in response to demand, although encouragement by the provision of information on the services available is vital.

Generalisations on the effectiveness of formal classes for the teaching of English as a second language also need to be viewed with caution.

Formal classes conducted in centres equipped for the use of slides, films, video and audio tapes and video cameras for filming progress in language learning provide a service which is more likely to be effective than home tutoring or locally-based groups led by amateur instructors – except where the latter serve the needs of immigrants in specific situations.

Some immigrants with little or no education as well as others with technical or professional skills are interested primarily in attending formal classes for intensive instruction for a number of hours per week which few home tutors could spare. Ideal though one-to-one instruction may appear, the communicative experience gained from working in groups must not be overlooked.

As AMES (Adult Migrant Education Service) in NSW has had some 16,000 students enrolled in language classes at any one time, surely the only practical approach is an education service which provides both formal classes and individualised instructions as required, as does AMES.

On-the-job classes certainly serve the needs of some immigrants at their place of employment but are by no means universally available. They are subject to constraints such as the number of employees requiring instruction at a particular centre and the attitude of employers and relevant unions. The English so taught relates principally to the work situation and does not fully satisfy the social language needs of the immigrants.

Effective instruction, wherever located, depends upon quality of the teaching and the response and motivation of the student. Formality or informality of presentation is a feature of an individual teacher's style.

In this situation of diversity of location, needs and national groups seeking instruction, I see a potentially effective role for public librarians in supporting those working in the field of English language teaching.

Dissemination of information and use of bi-lingual and bi-cultural staff present difficulties not easily solved where a wide range of non-Anglo-Celtic languages are spoken. Valuable clues as to back-up and other materials required for their students and possibly the relatives and friends of those students could well be obtained from discussions with teachers and tutors working locally. Such people could also give advice regarding the national groups seeking to learn English and their level of expertise.

Librarians wishing to provide English language materials for immigrants will be pleased to know that there has been a marked increase in the last 12 months in the availability of worthwhile texts. However, these and the so-called systems of self-instruction are of doubtful value to immigrants with very little English, though they may assist those who have some knowledge on which to build

Librarians should agitate for the updating of the *Graded English Reading List*, which was compiled in 1976. It could be extended with benefit to cover some series of readers which have become available since then.

In conclusion, I wish to enlarge on Mr Bertelli's reference to centralised resources provision. In my view, both people and materials should ideally be made available as required from a central location.

Bi-lingual or bi-cultural library technicians and librarians could be allocated to libraries at specific times on specific days on a regular basis. Materials could likewise be made available and returned when no longer required.

In this way a wide range of relevant English language materials could follow the movement and progress of immigrants needing them. It would also solve the problem of materials not in demand in some libraries and the demand without materials in others.

Margaret Simpson
Adult Migrant Education Service

Wilson buys Mansell

The H.W. Wilson Company, New York, has bought Mansell Publishing. Formerly a part of the publishing division of Bemrose UK Ltd, Mansell will remain in London, operating as a limited company and a subsidiary of Wilson.

Founded in 1966, Mansell publishes bibliographies and other reference works for academic and research libraries throughout the world. The new company expects to publish between 25 and 30 titles each year.

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