

VIEWPOINT

HAVE YOU HEARD that 1981 is the International Year of Disabled Persons? If not, you have obviously been cut off from the mainstream of information dissemination.

So much has already been written on the topic that the danger of over-exposure exists. Yet the importance of the matter demands constant attention.

As a test of the effectiveness of pre-1981 publicity might I ask you to consider what changes in attitudes and actions you have observed during this early part of 1981. Of more relevance, might I ask how that publicity has affected your own response to service to the disabled.

Many scribes have offered their views as to the purpose of IYDP and they all appear legitimate and worthy. In terms of action, however, none of us would be so naive as to expect during 1981 any radical change in building provision or other major practical aspects of service to the disabled. What the disabled have every right to expect of us in the short term is a realisation that IYDP is essentially about attitudes.

There can be little doubt that we *know* that problems of access and availability exist for people in wheelchairs, for those with visual or auditory impairment, etc. Yet the stark reality is that we are seldom *aware* of the consequences of serious impairment. Hopefully the publicity will raise our consciousness of the plight of the disabled, make us increasingly aware of the limited social choices at their disposal and seriously consider how we can assist in improving the control and power the disabled have in the provision of appropriate services.

Some positive steps are certainly in train. The Association has direct involvement in the National Advisory Committee on Library Services for the Handicapped; that, however, may be seen as a committee of the bureaucracy and therefore fraught with the usual dangers. The Project MIND column in *Incite* provides a necessary and fulfilling information transfer function. Various institutions have also indicated positive action planned for 1981. That leaves us, as individuals, to address the issues involved, to examine the extent (if any) of our commitment to a grossly neglected group of our clientele and to plan remedial action.

The essence, however, is our degree of understanding. Can we in 1981 at least acknowledge our previous poor performance and set about developing an attitudinal change which, in time, will bear appropriate fruit?

Jim Dwyer LAA President

'Job Focus'

THE ROYAL BLIND SOCIETY OF NSW held an exhibition from 2-6 March aimed at helping the public understand the capabilities of visually impaired people in the workforce.

Called 'Job Focus', the exhibition was opened by Mr Rex Jackson, Minister of Youth and Community Services. It featured a wide range of electronic equipment which enables visually impaired people to work as effectively as any member of the sighted community.

For more information about RBS contact Ian Allan, Public Relations Manager, (02) 747 6622 ext 16.

SA improving services to disabled

THE COMMITTEE on Library Services for the Handicapped in South Australia was set up in 1979 as a result of the seminar 'Library services for the handicapped' held in Canberra, August 1979.

It was suggested at this seminar that each state might set up a state committee and that this recommendation would eventually be made at Cabinet level. Western Australia set a precedent by forming a committee, and South Australia decided to follow this.

The aim of the committee (SA) is to increase standards of library service to the disabled in the community by encouraging libraries to implement services and provide resources appropriate to the needs of the disabled.

To do this the committee has formed four sub-committees:

- In-service training (a short course for public and school/community libraries' staff);

- A booklet *Consider your library* will be produced by a sub-committee. It will incorporate practical ideas for libraries to improve access, services and resources in relation to disabled users;

- Catalogues. One central collection of catalogues of materials particularly relevant to disabled users is being collected;

- Audiovisual hardware. A sub-committee will work with the Public Libraries Division to gather individual assessments of hardware to provide an advisory service for libraries selecting resources. It will also investigate the availability of hardware for loan.

For more information about the committee contact Angela Roodhouse, Special Education Resources Unit, 87 Anzac Highway, Ashford, SA 5035, telephone (08) 297 7667; or Ann Reece, Brighton City Library (08) 296 1207.

Resources for the handicapped at Deakin

MR J.E. GOUGH, Dean of Educational Services at Deakin University, is developing a resource centre for handicapped students interested in higher education. The project involves the transformation of learning materials for use by students with various kinds of disability and the development of appropriate teaching, administrative and support services. The program does not require attendance on the campus.

To cater for disabled students, the University has developed a range of courses for which all the teaching material has been developed and printed in advance. Course material consists of study guides, readers containing a considerable amount of reference and background material written by other specialists in the field together with specialised publications of varying kinds. In addition, audio and video programs have been prepared. For more information about the project, contact Mr Gough, Deakin University.

THE MIDDLE EAST

On behalf of the Australasian Middle East Studies Association the Footscray Institute of Technology is preparing to undertake an evaluation of national information resources on all areas of the Middle East.

Libraries with resources on, or an interest in, any aspect of the Middle East please write to



AMESA
Co-ordinator
Footscray Institute of
Technology Library
PO Box 64
Footscray Vic 3011

Details of resources are not required at this stage.

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