

# National Advisory Committee on Library Services for the Handicapped

**T**HE ADVISORY COMMITTEE was formed on the recommendation of the National Working Party on Library Services for the Handicapped, which presented its report in April 1979.

Much of the business of the Advisory Committee (which is a sub-committee of the Council of the National Library of Australia) concerns the implementation of the recommendations of the Working Party, but a number of new initiatives have also been taken.

## Work of the committee

*State Advisory Committees* The Committee has endorsed the view that delivery of services is primarily a state matter involving state, public and academic libraries and organisations of/for disabled people.

On the advice of the National Library Council the Prime Minister wrote to the Premiers and the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory on 4 December 1980 drawing attention to the Working Party recommendation that State Advisory Committees on library services to disabled people be established. (The letter noted that this recommendation had already been implemented in Western Australia.)

*National Union Catalogue of Library Materials for the Handicapped* This project is now well advanced. The catalogue will be produced in computer output microfiche and the first edition, due to appear early this year, will contain approximately 2500 titles. The Union Catalogue project is seen as a key element in the National Library's role of ensuring maximum shared access to materials held in Australia.

*Production Register* The National Library has an important function in assisting organisations producing materials in special media for disabled people to avoid wasteful duplication of effort. Accordingly a register of productions of such materials currently in progress is at an advanced stage of planning.

*Dissemination of Information* The National Library's newsletter *LINK-UP* is being published in both print and audio formats. Its purpose is to keep everyone interested abreast of new technology and other developments

relevant to library service to disabled people, and to encourage feed-back on directions being taken by the Advisory Committee and the National Library.

*Copyright* The Committee is giving on-going consideration to copyright questions, particularly in relation to the amended Copyright Act. The aim of the Committee is to ensure that organisations servicing disabled people are in no doubt about their rights to copy print material into special media.

It is hoped that the International Trade Book Fair to be held in Melbourne in March will provide an opportunity for the National Library to discuss some of the issues involved with local and overseas publishers. The Committee has recommended that the National Library should offer to advise the Attorney General's Department in the implementation of sections of the new Act which affect disabled people.

*Survey of handicaps 1981* The Advisory Committee was pleased to have the opportunity to study the proposed interview schedule for the Australian Bureau of Statistics Survey of Handicaps, 1981 and suggests additional questions concerning reading needs. The survey will be the most extensive of its kind ever carried out in Australia and ought to provide library authorities with valuable information on potential numbers of disabled users.

*Directory of Services* The National Library, in consultation with the Advisory Committee, is planning a second, expanded edition of the *Directory of Library Services for Handicapped Persons*.

*Alternative computer output* On the recommendation of the Committee the National Library will be contacting computer hardware producers to raise their awareness of the need to provide audio and tactile output options in equipment used to access information data bases.

## Membership

All members of the Committee were appointed in a personal capacity after nomination by various 'umbrella' organisations (eg NACH, ACROD, National Council for and of the Blind, LAA).

It has been a matter of great concern to some Committee members and to other interested individuals and groups that the present membership does not include any disabled people. A strong recommendation to rectify this situation was made at the December meeting at which a disabled observer attended by invitation. It is hoped that the membership of the Committee will be increased to ensure participation by disabled people. The urgency of this issue should not be under-estimated.

Since the establishment of the Working Party in 1977 the 'self-help' movement among disabled people has gathered momentum, and participation is seen as a matter of principle.

## Conclusion

It is unlikely that in these straitened times anyone seriously expected the appointment of the Advisory Committee to result in the immediate commitment of major new resources to this long neglected area.

The fact that the National Library now has an active program on library services to disabled people, being undertaken by excellent staff, must be regarded with some satisfaction.

While there is no room for complacency – and indeed much justification for impatience in an area where the needs are so great – the effort of building a national co-operative network of library service to disabled people has to be seen as a medium to long-term project.

The main requirement is that all concerned – and not least the National Advisory Committee – continue to work with the utmost commitment to the achievement of this goal in the minimum possible time.

Don Schauder

(LAA nominated member)

National Advisory Committee

on Library Services for the Handicapped

# Recipes, tried but unseen

**A** COOKBOOK for visually disabled people *In charge of the mess* has been co-operatively produced by the Gas and Fuel Corporation of Victoria, the Braille and Talking Book Library, Vic, and the Royal NSW Institute for Deaf and Blind Children.

There is no print copy of the book and the two editions to be seen (and heard) are in braille, which runs to eight volumes, and audio (seven cassettes) which have been produced from a typewritten manuscript specifically designed with the needs of the visually disabled cook in mind.

People who are print and/or visually handicapped are generally not able to acquire their own books, partly because of the prohibitive cost, and generally have to rely on libraries for their recreational and informational needs. It was felt that a cost comparable to that of a quality print version would be appropriate and due to financial help from the Gas and Fuel Corporation and the Royal NSW Institute for Deaf and Blind Children the cookbook is available at \$22.50 for the audio version and \$20 for the braille.

*In charge of the mess* was launched in Melbourne on 27 February by the Chairman of the Gas and Fuel Corporation, Neil Smith. Further information from Lelde Ramma, Marketing Services Division, Gas and Fuel Corporation (03) 652 4632, or Jan Smark, Braille and Talking Book Library (03) 26 4786.



Second National Seminar on

## LIBRARY SERVICES FOR THE HANDICAPPED

Canberra, 18-20 May 1981

The National Library of Australia is sponsoring the second National Seminar on Library Services for the Handicapped. The Seminar aims to provide an opportunity for handicapped people and representatives of libraries, voluntary agencies, government instrumentalities and others interested in library services for the handicapped to come together and discuss the question of meeting the informational, cultural and recreational needs of the handicapped.

The seminar will be held on 18-20 May 1981 at University House, Australian National University, Canberra.

Seminar fee: \$65.00

Enrolments close: 21 April 1981

For brochure and further information contact:

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