

Acron and abbrev

THE AUSTRALIAN DICTIONARY OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS comp David J. Jones. Leura: Second Back Row Press, 1981. 2nd rev ed. 220pp. ISBN 0 909523 243. \$20.

This book is a revision and expansion, by about 25 percent, of the first edition of 1977.

It appears that it is principally concerned to cover two categories of acronyms and abbreviations: those for general terms which are in world use in English (kg, kilogram; jr, junior), and those which are specific to Australia. Thus the LAA is included, but the ALA that most librarians would think of is excluded: members of the Australian Lebanese Association and three other similarly initialled Australian institutions are duly recognised. This runs even to the exclusion of LC, though the numbers have it here as in politics: DDC appears.

There are three substantial difficulties in compiling a dictionary of abbreviations. First, even if the field remained stable, the number of abbreviations is immense. Second, it is a field of constant flux – institutions disappear, are created. David Jones has mounted a tiger. Third, only in some narrow fields is there real standardisation. Anglo-Australian scientific scholarly usage has not found a single standard to replace the *World list of scientific periodicals*, and there is even wider variation in scholarly writing outside the sciences, to say nothing of popular usage or of usage across fields.

Given this, David Jones's *Australian dictionary* is a heroic performance which repeatedly proves to be well selected and accurate. Over several weeks I have tested it on employer and employee associations and major companies named in the *Australian Financial Review*,

Queensland organisations, librarians' acronyms, journal abbreviations, qualifications and decorations held by Australians, and abbreviations in sport. Occasionally, the Queensland chauvinist is disappointed: at Easter the RAS stages its Sydney show, but what about the RNA in August? Many, but not all, sporting abbreviations appear: a punter carrying Jones to the races, like a birdwatcher's field guide, would happily see a blk c. win by 3 lgths, but would be bewildered if a gr.r. won by a sht nk even if fav.

The treatment of Australian bibliographical abbreviations could take up a monograph on its own. Jones has abbreviations for a substantial number of significant titles, but by no means covers all the abbreviations used for those titles: for example, many of the journals abbreviated Aust etc. will also be abbreviated A etc., and vice versa.

But overall the book stands up remarkably, and is an essential acquisition for all Australian libraries of any general subject scope. For its existence, one can only say 'L.D.'

Spencer Routh,
University of Queensland

Canadians assist

PROJECT PROGRESS: A STUDY OF CANADIAN PUBLIC LIBRARIES. Ottawa: Canadian Library Association. 120pp. C\$10.00. ISBN 0 88802 154 2. 1981

The Canadians have been working for us. This book is the final report in a major program of research into their public libraries intended to supply a base of practical information that public library planners and decision makers would find useful in understanding and dealing with the current and future status of the public library services in Canada.

With a few obvious exceptions, such as levels of expenditure, it appears to do the job for us also. Those who are old enough to remember our surveys, *Libraries and people in Melbourne* (Handfield), *The Westudy Report, Access and attitudes* (Trask), and *Strategies for change. Library and information services for Whyalla* (Brown), will find sufficient similarities in this report to convince them of its relevance to us. The study is thus compulsory reading for planners and decision makers in the public library field.

It suggests courses of action under the general headings communication, co-operation, public relations, marketing, labour relations and expansion.

There is a message for the national library association – improve communication with the various sections and branches and other associations representing the interests of libraries and librarians in Australia: ASLA, LASIE, VALA, etc., etc.

And the public library service must have a higher profile in the Association if public library interests are to be to the fore.

There is a message for the heads of all libraries. Multi-type library councils may be needed to foster co-operation between the various types of libraries. Computer networks may help.

The public library needs a better image. Those who use it come to recognise its worth, but libraries must become better positioned to supply the new types of information services required by society and project a more complete and balanced picture of what they are about – not just repositories of books. An active role in community and public relations is essential.

More explicit marketing of public libraries is needed. The improved educational level of the community provides the potential cus-

tomers, new information technologies provide the means of serving their needs, but the emergence of private sector agencies that will compete directly with public libraries represents a challenge.

Our cousins are more worried about the dreaded phenomenon 'unionisation' than we are but the suggestion that industrial relations be part of the librarian's armoury is not amiss.

Finally, despite the fact that someone has lost the key to the till, public libraries need to expand.

There is a lot of meat in this study. It should be read, marked, learnt and inwardly digested by all those involved in the LAA, by library educators and by those who wish still to be in librarianship tomorrow.

Allan Horton
University of NSW

FOL Sourcebook

FRIENDS OF LIBRARIES SOURCEBOOK / ed Sandy Dolnick. Chicago: American Library Association. 1980. 166pp. US\$6.00. ISBN 0 8389 3245 2. Copy supplied by the James Bennett Group.

Friends of Libraries groups are uncommon in Australia or Britain, but they appear to flourish in the American environment. It is probably no coincidence that this book appears at a time when the tax revolution is at its height in the United States and cuts of 50 percent or more in property taxes are biting deeply into many of the local library services long taken for granted.

Essentially this work is the outcome of a nation-wide survey conducted by the Friends of Library Committee of the ALA. It is thus an ideas exchange providing guidelines for the establishment and successful continuance of Friends, examples of proven activities undertaken, and studies of the typical roles and problems of a volunteer organisation.

There are five principal areas in which it is felt that Friends can contribute – money, services, public relations, advocacy, community involvement – and this book is careful to give a balanced account of each of these.

However, a substantial part of this work is devoted to the organisation, management, goals and potential pitfalls of Friends groups themselves. These, I feel, are particularly valuable in the Australian environment, where community activity and involvement by individuals is generally acknowledged to be on a much lower level than in the United States.

The point is made that a Friends group does not have to be large to be effective, but it has to be well organised, and even more important, be truly visible to the community and to the library authority. The book is strong, as would be expected, on publicity and public relations.

The latter part of the book includes 'biographies' of five actual organisations, the text of the survey conducted by the ALA, and a sample constitution and bylaws. Not all of the chapters will be relevant to the Australian library environment, but since it arises out of the experiences of Friends themselves, it addresses itself rather well to the lay person as well as the librarian.

I intend to commend it to our own Library's Friends, as I believe it will help them to define their role more clearly and encourage a sense of direction which is often difficult to develop in voluntary groups.

John Flint
Willoughby Municipal Library

Call For Papers

The use of telecommunications
in education and training

Australian Society of Educational
Technology

National Conference

Kuring-gai CAE
14–15 May 1982

Submissions are welcomed from interested persons who wish to deliver short papers (approx 20 minutes duration), run organised workshops or contribute papers to be distributed during the conference.

Prospective contributors should contact Mr Stuart Fletcher, Head, Dept of Production Services Kuring-gai CAE, PO Box 222 Lindfield NSW 2070. Phone (02) 467 9359.

Closing date for submissions is 28 February.

REVIEWS — continued

Australian studies

AUSTRALIAN STUDIES. A SELECT GUIDE TO RESOURCES, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES/comp Margaret Zerner. St Lucia: University of Queensland. 1981. 110pp. ISBN 0 86776 016 8.

This small handy-sized 110 page book is the first publication to be issued by the Australian Studies Centre (Humanities and Social Sciences) of the University of Queensland.

One of the main reasons for the founding of this centre in 1979 was because of the richness of Australian resource materials held at the University and other institutions in the Brisbane area.

In this publication Margaret Zerner has explored those holdings. She has not set out to give a detailed bibliography but rather to indicate the scope and acquisition policy of the various collections, stressing areas about which information is not readily available.

The headings under which the entries are grouped appear to have been dictated by strength of holdings and practical demand.

Some are by type of material and some by subject. They include newspapers, census and statistics, Gallup and other opinion polls, publications of political parties, education in Queensland, industrial relations, Queensland history, Fryer indexes, etc. Private and official archival sources are included as well as publications. The mixture is handled easily, dealing with manuscript material mainly in general terms.

The section headed Trade Union Records includes a more detailed note on 33 trade unions and their holdings, the result of a survey carried out by questionnaire. This is useful as it gives a lead to otherwise unlisted material.

This principle is well followed also in the section on newspapers, where only holdings are included if they are additional to the National Library's *Newspapers in Australian Libraries* (last edition was 1975).

Constraints of time and finance precluded cross referencing and there is no index, but these are hardly needed in a book of this size and arrangement.

At a time when some of us are still deliberating on how to compile a bibliography of resource materials for Australian history for the Bicentenary publications it is good to see that Queensland has taken the bull by the horns and done it.

I am sure it will be a most useful reference tool for every Australian history student in Queensland and should save librarians there a lot of time previously spent in guiding people to relevant sources.

Margaret Medcalf

LAA 22 Guests

Due to personal commitments, JUDY BLUME is not able to accept our invitation to be a guest at the Conference.

SHIRLEY HUGHES, children's book author and illustrator is arriving in Perth approximately 13 September, and departing Brisbane on a date to be announced.

Shirley's itinerary is being arranged by John Cody of Bodley Head and Richard Parslow of Collins. If you would like her to visit you, contact Richard Parslow, Education Manager, William Collins & Sons Pty Ltd, GPO Box 476, Sydney NSW 2001.

Thanks to all those who assisted me with arrangements for Judy Blume's proposed visit.

Harry B. Bahlin

LATEST ON VIDEOTEX

IT NOW APPEARS almost certain that the Minister for Communications will be forced to reverse his decision to exclude Telecom from the Australian Videotex arena. The reason is simple: most of the potential commercial beneficiaries of Australian Videotex systems want Telecom **in not out**.

Here is a quick recap on recent developments:

- Kerry Packer's company, Publishing and Broadcasting, has decided to forget trying to market an off-shore Videotex system in Australia. For a while it looked like P & B might use its Australian marketing agreement with British Post Office subsidiary, Prestel International to sell data base facilities to Australian information providers.

Not only was the cost of communications too high for P & B to make a go of it but the British GPO canned the whole Prestel International idea.

- The biggest worry, it appears, to potential commercial Videotex system providers is **not** which system to use. It is now the conventional wisdom that technical differences between some of the British, Canadian and French systems will iron themselves out over the next few years.

The big problem is that they need Telecom to provide a national grid, a national billing system and, most importantly, the cross subsidisation for rural and regional users. It would be fun indeed to watch National Country Party deputy leader, Mr Sinclair, attempt to facilitate a Videotex system which leaves his voting constituents out in the cold.

Telecom is really the only organisation which can provide national coverage. A quick look at the results, (ie very little), of a fragmented approach in the US might lead one to see the wisdom in the national common carrier being the prime mover in any given country.

Meanwhile ICL has announced that it will establish a commercial videotex bureau in Sydney and Melbourne for closed user groups. At the same time, the French are currently in town trying to flog their videotex system to whoever they figure might be in a position to buy 'em — which, in Australia at the moment, is a marketer's nightmare. (From *Horan, Wall & Walker Newsletter*, 18 December 1981).

The Association has written to the Minister for Communications expressing its concern at the decision to exclude Telecom for the time being from introducing a videotex service. The LAA and AACOBS issued a press release on 7 December which appears below. The *Australian Financial Review* on 9 December referred to and quoted from the press release:

'The Australian Advisory Council of Bibliographical Services (AACOBS) and the Library Association of Australia (LAA) have noted with concern the recent announcement by the Minister for Communications, Mr. Sinclair, that Telecom would not be permitted to proceed at present with its plans for the introduction of a national Videotex facility. We do not consider this constraint on Telecom to be in the public interest. We do not believe that Telecom should have any monopoly in this matter but it should not, we believe, be prohibited from being involved.

'We do not consider that questions of public sector versus private sector are relevant in this matter. We believe that the relevant

issue is the principle that a communication carrier should not control traffic content. We note therefore with concern that corporations in the private sector which have expressed interest in operating such services are a major retailing organisation and a major news and media corporation. It seems more than likely that such corporations would tend, despite the best will in the world, to limit the traffic content to organisations or interests in which they are associated, or sympathetic or, at the very least, not in direct competition.

'We do not dispute the interests of private enterprises in offering Videotex services of a general or specialised nature to either the community at large or to limited client groups. Users of such services should be quite free to determine whether or not the services and the conditions under which they are offered are appropriate to their needs.

'It is our opinion however that Videotex type services offer a means of information access and distribution of potentially major significance to Australian society at large in the 1980s and beyond. We believe that it is imperative that there be available a publicly owned facility through which information producers can distribute their products generally to the community and free of those constraints which will operate as a result of conflict of commercial interest in the case of privately owned Videotex systems. We believe that it is naive to assume that such conflicts of interest will not arise.

'It is therefore our view that it is in the public interest that a public authority be allowed to provide an appropriate carrier service as a means of access to, and distribution of information data bases. This service should be open to all interests in the community wherever they may be located through a single national and uniform system using equipment based on nationally accepted standards. In view of Telecom's record in developing a nationwide communication network it would seem appropriate that they should be the public authority charged with responsibility for providing a public and nationally available Videotex facility at this time.'

Chairman,
AACOBS Standing Committee
President,
Library Association of Australia

The *Australian Financial Review* on 16 December announced that the Department of Communications is reassessing the potential role for Telecom in providing a public videotex service and is examining schemes for joint Telecom/private sector capital involvement in setting up such a service. Mr Sinclair is anxious that videotex be available for a standard local call charge from anywhere around the country. This is one point which we specifically stressed in our correspondence with Mr Sinclair.

Claiming that the Government would about face early in the New Year, Senator Button said, 'The re-entry of Telecom is inevitable but the Minister wants to dispose of the matter during the height of the holiday season, when the electorate will be distracted.'

It is in our interests to carefully monitor progress and stress the LAA's concern that Telecom be involved through any media available.

Susan Acutt
Executive Director