

# Tribute to Mr L.C. Key

THIS ACCOUNT of the career of Mr L.C. Key, whose reported death was in *InCite*, 15 October 1982, was written by Sir Harold White, former National and Parliamentary Librarian, with whom Mr Key was associated in the development of both institutions.

Lionel Courtenay St Aubyn Key, MBE, BA, ALAA, Deputy Librarian of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library from 1947 to 1967, died recently at Castle Hill after a long illness. He is survived by his wife Elizabeth, two of his children and three grandchildren. Elizabeth Hall, as she was well and affectionately known professionally, was a most valued member of the same library staff and finally Director of its Library School.

Mr Key, known to his many friends within the library profession and outside as Courtenay, was one of the small but enthusiastic band of professional librarians who came together in 1937 to form the Australian Institute of Librarians, the predecessor of the Library Association of Australia which began in 1949. He was very active as the Institute's General Secretary in 1940/41, the year in which its third Annual Conference was held in Canberra, and later as President of the Canberra Branch.

Mr Key's long, varied and distinguished career in librarianship can only be properly appreciated by recalling that the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library was modelled on the Library of Congress which, in addition to its primary task of meeting the information needs of Senators and Members, assumed a responsibility for developing national library services. Though the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library's National services developed slowly, they were conducted from 1923 under the unofficial title of Commonwealth National Library until the National Library of Australia was officially established as a separate and independent institution by the National Library Act of 1960.

Mr Key made an important contribution to these national services, even though he may be remembered best for his direct service to the Parliament where his career began in 1925 and ended in 1967. His service with the National Library began in London as its first representative from 1944 to 1948. He also established the first Australian Information Library there, on the lines of those the United States had made so well and favourably known. He supervised the microfilming of records relating to Australia and the Pacific under the agreement of 1945 between the National Library and the Public Library of New South Wales. When UNESCO was being established he was a member of the Australian delegation to Paris and later a member of the UNESCO Committee for Libraries in Australia.

This experience was put to good use in support of the National Library's active program of cultural assistance to Asian countries when Mr Key returned to Australia as Deputy Librarian in 1948. The 1952 Australian Seminar for librarians from India, Indonesia and the Philippines was part of this. It was followed in 1954/5 by advice to the library authorities of Burma, India, Nepal and Pakistan, which took Mr Key to all of these countries.

Meanwhile, his continuing activity from 1948 to 1960 was assisting with the major restructuring of the National Library to meet the rapid development of its acquisition and other national and international programs, which led the Government to give it statutory recognition and a permanent building.



**Mr. L.C. Key at National Library Council meeting, 1960**

He also helped in the process of separation of the National and Parliamentary Libraries.

In 1961 Mr Key returned to the full-time service of the Parliament which was his first love. After his initial cadetship in the Library and his graduation from the University of Melbourne, he had pioneered the Legislative Reference Service following the transfer of Government to Canberra in 1927. He did this single handed at a time when most parliamentary library services were still primarily concerned with general reading.

In 1966 he took part in the establishment of the Legislative Research Service, a new concept in Australia and now recognised as one of the best of such services. On his retirement in 1967, aged 65, his service to Parliament was recognised with the award of the MBE.

The quality of mind and breadth of interest which helped Mr Key to illuminate both domestic and international affairs for Parliament also contributed to the intellectual and social life of Canberra. His awareness of other peoples and places was rare at a time when Australians were more parochial than they are today. This was also reflected in his active association with the Australian Institute of International Affairs and his early interest in joining our embryo External Affairs Department. In 1929 he was a keen candidate for a major post which was postponed indefinitely by Prime Minister Scullin. Since another keen candidate was John Metcalfe, those of us in libraries who firmly believe in the influence of individuals on the course of events might thank whatever gods may be that governments sometimes change their minds.



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## SEMINAR

### INTERFACING AUSTRALIAN LIBRARY SYSTEMS

Sydney Friday 26 November 1982

SHOULD WE GO INTO A NETWORK? ... With an increasing number of choices becoming available between stand-alone and networked automated library systems, this question is of major importance to librarians concerned with cataloguing, collection rationalisation or reference support. Some see a conflict between development of internal systems and a networked approach that may not be as cost-effective. Others feel there is much to gain economically and in terms of service by linking bibliographic systems.

These and other issues will be explored in the Information Science Section end-of-year Seminar, to be held in Sydney's Rocks District at:

**Archives Office of New South Wales, 2 Globe Street (Registration 9 a.m. to 9.30 a.m.)**

**Speakers include:** Gordon Undy of Information Sciences of Australia, who has recently completed a study 'Local Interfaces to the Australian Bibliographic Network' for the National Library and AACOBS, and representatives from:

**Systems Utilities:** A representative from Libramatic Systems Pty Ltd

**Public Libraries:** Richard Nichols (Public Libraries Division, State Library NSW)

**Academic Libraries:** Tony Mays (Deakin University), Sam Calvert (UNE)

**Special Libraries:** Bert Pribac (Commonwealth Dept of Health)

Lynn Pollack (Networking Committee NSW Branch Australian Law Librarian Group).

Speakers have been asked to provide brief descriptions of the current development of their library systems for distribution at the meeting. Their presentation, however, will be more concerned with the future development of their systems in relation to local or national co-operation.

Registration fee is \$45 LAA members, \$60 non members, including a light lunch and refreshments.

Please forward notification of attendance to:

**A. Mackenzie, Information Services Group, CSR Limited, GPO Box 483, SYDNEY 2001.**

with cheque made out to LAA Information Science Section (NSW) or register by 24 November on (02) 235 8523 and pay at the door.

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I would like to attend a dinner following the Seminar