

# King Coles' notes are humpty-dumped

A CRIB – that miscegenation of a book's best passages and a clumsy summary – may be so hard to find in a few years' time that it may be a rare book, worth more than the \$1.95 you paid for it.

A decision on cribs handed down recently in the British High Court sets a new standard for 'fair dealing' (how much of book can be used in excerpts before one is guilty of unfairly 'using' the poor author). The judge said that if a book might be bought *instead of* the original, if it is likely to prejudice the sales of the original title from which both publisher and author make their livings, then its publication is criminal.

Now that gives everyone second thoughts – publishers of textbooks and study aids, authors of critical commentaries, and digest makers of all sorts.

The British case was initiated by Alan Sil-litoe (*Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*), Laurie Lee (*Cider with Rosie*) and the heirs of George Bernard Shaw's estate in relation to a crib of *St. Joan*. Its eight days in court were financed by twelve publishers and organised from the offices of the Society of Authors. The defendant was McGraw-Hill, the UK importers of the Canadian-published Coles Notes (which are distributed here by Thomas C. Lothian in Melbourne).

Once a book is out of copyright, 50 years after its author's death, there is nothing to worry cribbers. But the three books cribbed in this case were in copyright – three of more than fifty titles on Coles' list of which this is true. An advertisement in the last issue of the *Australian Bookseller and Publisher* offers you Coles cribs of in-copyright titles like *Catch-22* (\$3.95), *Day of the Triffids* (\$1.95), *To Kill a Mockingbird* (\$3.95) and *Lord of the Rings* (\$3.50) – not a penny of which goes to the authors of those titles, whose consent for the cribs has not been sought.

Coles copped it. Coles isn't the worst of the cribbers – those are often local, rather than international, publishers. But it is a wealthy publisher who could afford to pay a percentage of a crib's cover price to the original author and who could be drawn (and let itself be drawn) into a very expensive court case.

From Judge Mervyn Davies' decision several other curious precedents emerge. First, though you are always allowed to quote from books, you are in the wrong if you quote a so-called 'substantial' part. Until now 'substantial' was thought to be just 'too large a proportion'; it turns out, according to the court, also to be a matter of the *importance* of the passage reproduced – which means that you're allowed to quote more of the boring bits of a book than of its best bits.

Second, reviewers and critics of a book are exempt from the stricture of 'fair dealing' provided they acknowledge the source of quotations. Much court time was taken up arguing what criticism is – whether the Coles mixture of synopsis, commentary and quotation aren't in fact criticism. The judge said no, a decision which may mean that academic books will be able to use quotations more liberally than workmanlike reading guides which rely on synopsis and explanation.

The British decision will eventually seep through to Australian courts and there will be changes in the cribs market. The plaintiffs want the simplest solution; ask an author for permission to crib his work and pay him a share of the profits. But this may so increase the price of a crib that it will no longer look as attractive to students.

Alternatively, cribs of in-copyright books could disappear from bookshops. After all, publishers can make as much money from cribbing *Great Expectations* and *Huckleberry Finn*. If study aids to all in-copyright books were suppressed this way, school syllabuses would change (much as teachers claim the photocopying legislation is forcing change), and turn children's attention away from contemporary writing.

This article, written by Michele Field appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 6 February 1982, and is reprinted with permission.

### Computers – cure or complaint.

LAA 22 – Adelaide, August 22-26, 1982.

## UNESCO Congress

A WORLD CONGRESS on Books is to be convened by UNESCO this year. Its theme will be 'Towards a reading society' and it marks the tenth anniversary of International Book Year.

Ten years later, UNESCO felt there was a need to look afresh at the book situation in the world, to assess what progress had been made and the problems that remain, and to examine the fundamental changes taking place with regard to books and reading that will affect both industrialised and developing countries in the years ahead.

The Congress will be held in London from 7-11 June, and it is to be a working meeting at which it is hoped a general consensus will emerge concerning a worldwide program of action responding to new conditions and needs to be carried out by UNESCO, the book professions and national authorities.

For further information contact: World Congress on Books (CC/BCE), Division for Book Promotion and Encouragement of International Cultural Exchanges, UNESCO, 7 place de Fontenay, 75007 Paris (France).

## GOVT BOOKSHOPS

THE AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SERVICE ASSOCIATION strongly opposes the federal government decision to sell Australian government bookshops to private enterprise. APSA claims that when making a profit is the primary aim, fewer specialist publications will be available. The Government bookshops currently handle the sale and distribution of a wide range of Commonwealth Government publications, many of which have no commercial market.

An information brochure, prepared by APSA is available at AGPS bookshops, and there is also available a suggested form letter to be sent to your local member or to the Minister of Administrative Services as an official protest.

## Oz books for Asia

AS THE FIRST stage in introducing Australian books to Korea, Kenneth Cook's novel *Wake in Fright* has been translated into Korean.

The translator was Choi Ok-yong, assistant professor at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, and the venture was jointly sponsored by the Australian Embassy in Korea, the Australian Foreign Ministry and the Australian Council.

Mikio Hiamatsu has recently completed the translation of a number of Australian short stories into Japanese. The book, published by Simul Press contains stories by a variety of Australian writers, including Norman Lindsay, Henry Lawson, Patrick White, Judah Waten, Randolph Stow, Alan Marshall, Frank Moorhouse and Hall Porter.

A further anthology of Australian short stories to be translated into Japanese is also under way. For these the translator is Milhio Ochi, and the book will be published by Hyoronsha Press.

## and big Oz too . . .

Colin Coles, Australian director of Chivers Book Sales Ltd, is compiling a list of Australian book titles which librarians would like to have made available in large print, and he is inviting recommendations.

The original editions of books suggested should not be more than 192 pages long, because of the increased bulk involved in conversion to large print format.

Lists of suggested titles would be welcome. Please send them to Colin Coles, 30 Mahon Avenue, Bendigo, Vic 3550.

## Access to ABN

THE NATIONAL LIBRARY of Australia, in association with the Australian Advisory Council on Bibliographic Services, has commissioned a study to solve a computer interfacing problem for one of its nationwide information networks.

A Canberra firm, Information Sciences of Australia, will carry out the study to identify and define computer interfaces which could be adopted to give potential users access to the Australian Bibliographic Network (ABN). The problem arises because libraries throughout Australia are operating many different computer systems, most of which do not allow them direct access to the network.

The study will be aimed at identifying the interface or interfaces which can most commonly be adopted, and Mr. Gordon C. Undy, of Information Sciences, will seek information from a number of computer manufacturers, suppliers and software houses. Any company not approached directly, but willing to provide information, should write to Mr. Undy at PO Box 784, Woden ACT 2606.

ABN is a cooperative on-line bibliographic service which streamlines library cataloguing procedures, reduces cataloguing costs, helps overcome duplication of library purchases and, through its resource-sharing aspects, improves services to the reading public.

It was put into operation by the National Library in November after a successful six-months trial with libraries in Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra and Adelaide.

Fifteen establishments, including universities, State libraries and Government departments, have already joined the network, while 16 others are on a waiting list to participate.