

Libraries and cable TV

WHETHER OR NOT Cable TV has any potential for the delivery of library and information services, is for many of us, still an unanswered question.

Although a recent seminar organised by the Victorian Ministry of the Arts on *Cable TV and the Arts* offered little new or of direct application to the Arts or libraries, there was a substantial amount of general comment of interest. Much of this was engendered by the reiteration on the preceding day by Senator John Button of his strong opposition to Cable TV and only lukewarm interest in RSTV (subscription TV). The effect was almost to make many at the seminar (which was totally booked out with several hundred present) feel that the whole exercise was redundant.

However comments were made during the seminar which libraries might note.

Kate Harrison from Cable Action (which operates under the aegis of the Australian Consumers Association) sounded a salutary warning on the stance taken by Button and the ALP to the effect that the ALP may be abdicating the only opportunity they have to ensure that Cable TV is introduced and firmly established on principles which are acceptable to them. If they totally reject it, it leaves the ground clear for the opposition when it returns to government to introduce cable on the basis of the Jones Report and of the expressed views of bodies like ACASCA (Australian Cable and Subscription Communications Association).

The last session of the day was a panel of prospective cable operators – (Jack Shea – head of the Myer operation; Peter Furze – David Syme; Paul Davies – Nilsen Premiere Pty and Bill Payne – Henry Jones IXL and recently become Chairman of ACASCA). It was clear that all four speakers—

- expect Cable TV to happen sooner or later and regard RSTV as no more than an interim development;
- retain their confidence that cable is a cost-effective development despite the apparent (though questioned) economic difficulties in some areas of cable operation in the US; and
- do not seem to regard it as a technology with a short life and do not appear to expect DBS (Direct Broadcasting Satellite) to make cable

redundant within the economic life of Cable TV systems. This view could, I suspect, be conditional on the expectation that Cable TV will start within a reasonable time span and that DBS developments in Europe and North America are not portents of DBS development on a substantial scale in Australia in the short term.

In summing up the day's papers and discussion, Bill Payne was critical of the opponents of Cable TV, particularly Kate Harrison and was very strongly pressing the line that separation of carrier and content was just not on in his view – an interesting position in view of his new ACASCA role. It was also of interest that he was the speaker who made the most positive reference to the view that the next generation would not go to the library but get their information via cable. It was not an appropriate forum to question the implications of his claims on carrier and content which generate an area monopoly, in contrast to his predictions of the future role of cable in accessing information. I doubt if he has put the two issues together and realised the implications of his position for society in the future.

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CONFERENCE NEWS



Profile on Richard Landon



ONE OF the first guest speakers to confirm attendance at next year's LAA-NZLA Conference in Brisbane is Mr Richard Landon, Head of the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto, Canada.

Mr Landon, 40, gained a BA and BLS from the University of British Columbia before taking up the position of Rare Book Cataloguer at the University of Toronto in 1967. Two years later he was promoted to Assistant Head of the Rare Books and Special Collections Department, a post he held until 1976. During that period he gained his MA from Leeds University, majoring in Bibliography and Textual Criticism. From May 1976 to January 1977, he acted as Head of the Department before assuming his present position in charge of the Thomas Fisher Library.

The theme of Richard Landon's conference paper will be, 'Special Collections and Conservation', a topic he is extremely well qualified to discuss. His vast experience at the Toronto University which included the presentation of numerous papers and lectures over a fourteen year period, should make him a most informative speaker. Mr Landon has indicated his willingness to participate in any number of programmes at the conference, specifically lecturing and leading seminars.

Mr Landon hopes to take another three or four weeks after the conference to see as much of Australia as possible, never having been here before. He would also like to tour New Zealand before returning home.

'I am particularly interested in visiting Special Collection departments, faculties of Library Science with programmes in the history of the book, and the major academic institutions', he said. 'Because the University of Toronto has one of the few special collections of Australiana in North America, I am interested in investigating ways of enriching and expanding the collection during my trip.'



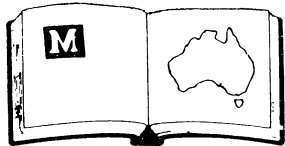
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