

## National Symposium on legal protection of computer software.

ATTENDING THE National Symposium on legal protection of computer software was like being a spectator at the opening of the photocopying or audio-visual copyright discussions. Copyright owners proclaimed that the Apple decision had undermined their property rights and placed their industry in mortal danger. Education and library representatives pointed out that the issues were much more complex and there was a danger that property rights might be asserted so exclusively as to cripple education and access to information. Anyone who has seen it all before knows that over a period of negotiation under the benevolent auspices of the Attorney-General's Department will, eventually, hammer out a compromise.

However there were new elements. Lawyers pronounced their views about the legal alternatives, the choice between copyright, patent law or a special Act for computer software. There is no standard approach in overseas countries and international bodies are busy discussing the details of a possible international treaty.

Another new, and refreshing, presence was the Software Liberation group with Albert Langer calmly telling the 250-strong audience that the Seminar was like a conference of toll-gate proprietors in the late 19th century claiming special protection because the toll-gates were being broken down and if they were not supported no more roads would be built.

The danger for libraries is that issues concerning the status of copyright information held in computers and property rights associated with the input and output of information from computer store have got swept up into the discussion on software. Few of the international discussions have paid attention to anything except the property rights of copyright owners. Libraries will increasingly hold information in computer files or on videodisks and if the more extreme positions presently held by copyright owners were adopted, there might be a charge every time a library supplied information from these sources. Libraries might even be forbidden to make printed copies from such files for users at all.

It is worth considering whether the Software Liberation view that to apply copyright principles devised nearly 300 years ago to the different world of current information technology is a nonsense. Software Liberation claims that there are 200,000 microprocessor owners in Australia, buying, swapping and copying packaged software and as impossible

to dragoon into copyright observance as the domestic video-tape copiers. Software Liberation's proposal is to place software in the public domain and support software development, other than contractual development, from public revenue. While this may appear an extreme view, there is certainly a case for publicly funded public domain software for educational and other socially desirable purposes. It was certainly clear from the statements by the representatives from the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee and the Education Council that the activities of their members would be crippled by a strict property rights approach to software protection. They pointed out that they spoke both as users and major creators of software.

By the end of the day it appeared that the Attorney-General's Department had received a number of useful messages. If the emergency legislation to which the government is already committed eventuates at all it is likely to be carefully modest. The discussions among interested parties, which have proved successful in reaching compromises between owners and users in other copyright areas, are likely to be used again to explore the even more difficult legal problems raised by the on-rushing computer technology. These discussions are likely to include much less hasty coverage of problems of interest to libraries than might otherwise have been the case.

A copy of AACOBS' statement to the National Symposium will appear in the agenda papers for the next meeting of AACOBS Standing Committee and copies have been sent to all Standing Committee members.

*F.D.O. Fielding*

## LAA's 50th anniversary

The ACT Branch agreed to the 1982 Annual General Meeting of the LAA to organize a suitable function in Canberra in 1987 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the LAA in Canberra in August 1937. The Branch is to prepare a program, together with budget implications, for General Council. The ACT Branch now calls for suggestions of ways of celebrating our 50th anniversary. Suggestions to Dr Maxine Rochester, ACT Branch, LAA, Box 679 GPO, Canberra, ACT 2601, by end of August 1984. Some suggestions from the ACT Branch:

1. Striking of commemorative medal (should be able to sell at profit).
2. Ask publications committee to prepare a suitable publication, e.g. Festschrift including overseas contributions, or a special issue of *Australian Library Journal*.
3. Invite LA, NZLA, CLA, ASLA, PNGLA and ALA to send a representative to Canberra function.
4. Meetings of General Council and Board of Education be held in Canberra near time for function, so that their members may attend the function. Perhaps the annual general meeting could be held at this time also.
5. Prepare touring exhibition of photographs, memorabilia, videotaped message from 1987 President of LAA, etc., to be sent around Branches in 1987.
6. Begin to prepare an oral history archive of the LAA.
7. Get sticker designed for 50th anniversary: to appear on LAA paper and envelopes, and posters distributed around libraries.
8. Money be set aside for invited guests at function. Guests to include retired serving members of Association and community leaders.
9. A special Australia Post commemorative envelope has been requested.



Western Australian Institute of Technology

### T L ROBERTSON LIBRARY SENIOR LIBRARIAN

Salary within the range  
**\$31,390 - \$36,585**  
and subject to review

Applications are invited from graduate librarians with management experience and experience of, or demonstrated interest in, library automation. Additional qualifications in a relevant area and/or a higher degree will be an advantage.

The appointee will assume administrative responsibility for systems development and co-ordination and will assist in the general management of the library with particular involvement in budgeting and staff matters. The appointee will be responsible to the Principal Librarian.

The WAIT Library has collections of 250,000 monograph volumes, 5,600 current serials and important non-book resources. It services 10,000 students and over 700 academic staff in a wide range of disciplines at undergraduate and post-graduate levels. The library has automated acquisitions, cataloguing and circulation systems, all developed in-house, and is active in information retrieval. Library staff number 100 and the annual budget exceeds \$2.5 million. (Ref 664)

Tenure: This position is available with tenure. However the Institute is interested in receiving applications from persons preferring a Limited Term appointment.

Conditions include fares for appointee and family plus assistance with removal expenses. Superannuation is available for staff with Tenure. Return fares are provided for staff appointed for a Limited Term.

Applications: Details including the names and addresses of three referees should be submitted not later than 31 May to the Appointments Officer, Western Australian Institute of Technology, Kent Street, Bentley, WA 6102, from whom further information may be obtained.

When applying please quote Ref. No. and Code INI.



**Riverina College of Advanced Education**  
An equal opportunity employer

### ASSISTANT LIBRARY TECHNICIANS

The William Merrylees Library which is located on the College's Wagga Wagga campus has vacancies for both full-time and part-time Assistant Library Technicians to work in serials, external student service, curriculum resources or cataloguing. Appointment to the part-time positions will be on a short term contract, the details of which are negotiable.

Salary range: \$15,379pa-\$16,947pa

### LIBRARIAN

Applications are invited from Graduate and non-Graduate Librarians for a short term contract, to work in the reference area.

Salary range: \$17,059pa-\$22,917pa

### GENERAL

Experience in an academic library desirable. Further particulars are available from Mr. S. Parnell on (069) 23 2342.

Applications close Friday May 25 1984 and should be made on forms available from:

The Registrar,  
**Riverina College of Advanced Education,**  
P.O. Box 588, Wagga Wagga, 2650.  
Telephone (069) 23 2230

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## ACT

**MAY 23** LAA Cataloguers' Sect ACT Group Seminar on Cataloguing and new technology **Burgmann College, ANU.** Speakers: Margaret Irvine, Ian McCallum, Gordon Undy, Doreen Parker and more. Cost: \$20 LAA members; \$30 non members; \$20 students, unemployed. Contact: Peter Hadad (062) 62 1428.

**JUNE 4-6** Insearch/DIALOG. DIALOG Introductory, Refresher and strategy Seminars. **Canberra.** Contact: (02) 264 6344 or (02) 218 9790.

**JUNE 7** ACT Branch of LAA executive **Monthly Meeting** held first Thursday of each month in **Seminar Room, Menzies Library, ANU.**

## Overseas

**AUGUST 19-25** 50th IFLA General Conference in **Kenya.** Theme: The basis of library and information services for national development. Contact: Joseph Nyamulu, 4/437 Flemington Road, North Melbourne, Vic. 3051. (03) 329 1136.

**OCTOBER 9-13** 19th IBBY Biennial Congress. **Nicosia, Cyprus.** Contact: Ena Noel (02) 32 5075.