

BOOKS IN THE BED

by Robin Robertson

Illustrated by Gordon Bain

Problem 2: Ability to identify a location where an item is held.

Suggested action:

- (a) Active encouragement of more union catalogue contributions from both ABN and non ABN libraries.
- (b) Libraries and the ABN network should give priority to the correction and upgrading of serial records in the ABN data base.
- (c) The feasibility of libraries identifying in ABN the standard of performance they offer should be investigated.

Problem 3: Speed of transmission of text.

Suggested action: Experiments of studies should be carried out, eg

- (a) by the University of Melbourne and its partners on telefax.
- (b) all cities on the performance of their local couriers.

Problem 4: Slow response to requests by suppliers.

Suggested action: Institutions should be asked for more precise statements identifying their own standards of performance.

Problem 5: Possible new technology solutions need investigation.

Suggested action:

- (a) An ILL module should go up on ABN.
- (b) The implications for ILL of even newer technology should be referred to the AACOBS/LAA Joint Committee on Information Technology.

Problem 6: Special relationship of state to public libraries.

Suggested action: Both state and public libraries should make public statements about what they believe to be their special responsibility towards a relationship with the departmental libraries of their jurisdiction.

State libraries should do the same with requests for public libraries, including a clear statement of their funding relationship. (eg is it covered by general subsidy?)

Problem 7: Need for a 'fast-track' system as well as 'normal'.

Suggested action: A special working party be set up to consider possible 'fast-track' systems. Eric Wainwright to organise this.

Problem 8: Do net lenders require greater funding support?

Suggested action: A positive attempt to redirect traffic may alleviate some problems.

Borrowers should be provided with information about which libraries are over-loaded, which are net lenders.

Borrowers should be encouraged to go to the smallest available library, eg choose a net borrower.

Problem 9: Does the whole system require greater subsidy?

Suggested action: Funding should not be provided from the recurrent costs of interlibrary loans for infrastructure, upgrading the system.

It is planned to distribute these resolutions and statements widely throughout the Australian library community.

A feasibility study on the establishment of an independent central agency to operate, organise and monitor the service will begin almost immediately.

Jenny Adams
Executive Director

I love reading in bed. In fact, it's the only way I can get to sleep. I must read something — a paragraph or a page — and then I drift into an intellectual slumber.

But, first, I must be comfortable. I climb into bed, switch on my bedside lamp, plump up my pillows, tuck the quilt under my chin and turn my electric blanket down to simmer.

Then I'm ready. The only thing missing is a good book . . . I can't find one I'm strong enough to read. For instance, I was reading *The Anzacs*, a fascinating book by Patsy Adam-Smith, but I had to stop because it was too heavy. Not in content, but in weight.

It was a quarto-size book with thick glossy pages and a bullet-proof cover. Every night I'd open it, lean it on my stomach and start reading. Somehow, I just couldn't relax . . . especially when the book was so heavy, I had to stiffen my abdominal muscles to prevent internal injuries.

open. Its natural state was closed and it simply refused to open, let alone stay open while I read it. So, I decided the binding was too rigid, and I loosened it. I bent both covers behind the spine, and the pages fell on to the bed, in random order. I lost the thread of the story.

I didn't do that to my next paperback. It didn't want to open either and I respected that. I would prise the cover ajar, and stop when I heard a splintering sound. This created a narrow opening between the pages, and admitted enough light for me to peer in and read the print on the outer edge of the page.

I was half-way through the book when it slipped out of my hands and snapped shut, leaving no trace of where I was up to. I read a few pages, trying to find the thread of the story, but again it was lost. However, I kept the book. It made an excellent mouse trap.



Because I wasn't very fit, I could only stiffen those muscles for a few minutes before they'd tire, and the book would gradually subside out of my view. I'd lift it in the air, and while it hovered uncertainly over the quilt, I'd read on, knowing that my arm muscles would soon turn to jelly, and again I'd have to lower the book on to my stomach . . . For a short time, I'd go to war with my Aussie comrades. They would march across Egypt carrying 50 kilo packs, putting me to shame, because I couldn't carry a two-kilo book while reading.

Finally I'd have to turn on my side, and rest the book on the mattress. I'd lean one cover on my arm so the book was open at a right-angle, and I could read the page facing me, but not the page facing the ceiling. Gradually, I lost the thread of the story.

The next book I tried to read was a paperback. It wasn't heavy. It just didn't want to

Next, I tried reading a newspaper. This caused some marital discord because my husband, who was also in bed, couldn't sleep in a newspaper tent. The rustling of pages woke him and when he opened his eyes he saw words like 'axe murderer', 'earthquake' and 'train strike', hanging like omens over his head.

This unsettled him so he went into the kitchen, and came back with a big crisp Granny Smith apple. He sat up in bed and ate it. Mercilessly. Every bite was a loud crack, like dry wood breaking. Every chew sounded like someone walking through very wet mud. Every swallow . . . no, I can't bring myself to tell you . . . it's enough that I heard every squelch, even with my fingers in my ears, and two pillows over my head.

And — you guessed it — I lost the thread of the story.