

Views from far away places

The responses by members to Jenny Adams' request for news from overseas members has been very pleasing. Below is a report from Ross Shimmmon, for several years in Papua New Guinea and now back in England.

I joined the LAA whilst I was on the staff of the Library Studies Section at the Administrative College of Papua New Guinea (ADCOL) in Port Moresby. I valued the publications of the LAA and thoroughly enjoyed (and benefitted from) the Adelaide conference in 1982. I must admit also that I had an eye on possibly seeking employment in Australia, instead of returning to the UK at the end of my stay in PNG. However, after a demanding but extremely satisfying 5 years there, during which I was involved in a substantial redesign of the range of courses offered by ADCOL, the publication of *PNGLA Nius* and *Tok Tok Bilong Haus Buk* by the Papua New Guinea Library Association, as well as other developments in the PNG library world, such as the Library Council and the embryonic Books Council, we as a family decided to return to the UK.

We all enjoyed our short visits to Australia, however, and nurse the hope that one day an opportunity to return, even if only briefly, will somehow present itself. The immediate reason for our return to the UK was the offer of my present post, Divisional Secretary for Manpower and Education at The Library Association in London. I now have overall responsibility for the LA's work in a wide range

of areas of great interest to me, including education & training for library & information work, the salaries and conditions of service of library and information workers and the need to make the case to government and other bodies for the provision of funds so that people have access to good, modern library and information services, despite recurrent cuts in expenditure.

But my overriding preoccupation at present is Secretaryship of the LA's Futures Working Party. It met all last year and produced a radical report recommending that LA should expand its membership base, both *outwards* to embrace other people in the 'information industry' and *downwards* (if that is the right term) to include those who do not seek professional status. (The LA has not been as hospitable to this group as the LAA has). It also recommended a new system of professional qualifications, a new structure encouraging greater involvement of existing and future groups, and a pro-active role for the Secretariat — LAA members will no doubt see parallels in all this with recent developments in Australia.

Our Council accepted the main thrust of the Report, but did not endorse any of its recommendations. Instead it instructed the Working Party to consult the membership and report back at the end of 1985. This the Working Party is now doing. We have received, at the time of writing, 35 written submissions and more than 25 meetings have been organised up and down the UK (I am writing this piece on my way to one in Manchester). The Working Party has certainly created a stir!

I still belong to the LAA because I find it extremely useful to see (since I can't really

participate), from a member's point of view, what a sister professional association is up to.

Ross Shimmmon
Divisional Secretary for
Manpower and Education
The Library Association, London

NB: The report referred to is *Report of the Futures Working Party as presented to Council on 1st November 1984*, published by The Library Association, 1984.

And from Tee Eng Sui from the Reference Services Division in Singapore National Library comes one of those interesting stories that show that luck can play a large part in the most diligent of searches:

The Luck Factor

Searching for information can be a chancy business. One day, as I was looking for information on the Canadian mezzo-soprano Eva Gauthier in the *Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* on microfilm, a gentleman happened to stand beside me. When I rolled the pages slowly through the 16 March 1911 issue, the man suddenly shouted: 'Hold it!' There, right in front on the screen was the article he was looking for: Mr Archibald A. Swan and McLaren who designed the Masjid Sultan, the oldest mosque in Singapore. The gentleman, by the name of Mr Lee, a retiree, was pleased. Instead of having to spend a whole afternoon to look for the article, he got it within minutes — and all just because of luck.

Tee Eng Sui
Reference Services Division

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