



The library profession

I read with interest Ron Maskell's letter in *InCite* of 17 May 1985 (p.16) and strongly sympathise with the regrettable reception some librarians have received at the CES; yet the fault lies only partly with an incompetent and ignorant office staff in that government department.

It is about 45 years since the library profession in Australia formed itself into a quasi-professional association. Those who were in the forefront then — and stayed there for ever so long — did not recognise the need to persuade the state and federal governments to register professional members of our calling in the same way in which other professions were protecting their calling — and the public at large. Instead emphasis was placed on having leading lay persons (i.e. in this context non-librarians) preside over the library association and to lend the weight of their social position to defend our professional aspirations. At the same time too much emphasis was placed on attracting institutional membership which subsequently was ripped off financially and fobbed off with vague promises that the Association would determine unambiguously who is a librarian and who is not. Yet in practice the Association has never been able to provide such guarantees and employing authorities, then as now, give more weight to an appropriate certificate from a university or college than to evidence of LAA professional membership. The origins of this dilemma lie in the personalities that shaped the LAA in its early days. It will be interesting to read of these less savoury aspects of misguided zeal when the history of LAA's first 25 years is finally written.

As for today, it would be more useful by far if the LAA Council were to try and make good past neglect and endeavour to have librarian-

ship listed as a registered profession rather than chase all the bits of straw that are flying in the fashionable winds off the Australian coast. Some of us older members have tried hard to impress upon Australia that librarianship is a profession and a way of life. It is time the younger generation identified the errors of the past and took up the cudgels for the official recognition of our calling. We still have a long way to go — q.e.d. *D.H. Borchardt*

ALISA

Bill Thorn's review of *ALISA, Australian Library and Information Abstracts*, 1983 (*InCite* 17 May p.12) was balanced and fair, particularly in the comments on the deficiencies in the subject indexing.

Because of its relationship with the *Australian Education Index* ALISA has used the ERIC thesaurus which is deficient in the library and information science area. Some improvement will be achieved with the use of ACER's recently published *Australian Thesaurus of Education Descriptors*.

Despite its limitations ALISA does represent a significant achievement in that Australia is now recording its documentation in library and information science more comprehensively than, it is suspected, any other Western country. All items are abstracted (as a labour of professional love!) and the list of journals and newsletters being received is substantial (a check list will be published in a forthcoming issue of *InCite*).

The long-term value of a definitive collection of Australian documentation in library and information science appears to have been recognised by libraries and publishers who, in the main, have readily contributed free copies of publications and documents to ACHLIS.

ALISA 84 will be available later this year and may be ordered from:

Library Publications
SACAE Library Holbrooks Road
Underdale SA 5032.
(approx. \$35.00)

It is unfortunately not economic to publish ALISA as a quarterly at present but citations are provided in the quarterly *Australian Education Index* and *Australasian College Libraries*. Abstracts may be retrieved by searching the *Australian Education Index* AUSINET database which is updated regularly.

Alan Bundy
Director
ACHLIS

Information please

I have been asked to submit a review article on OPAC systems in Australia for a special issue of *Program* in April, 1986. There is so much good work being done in this country at the moment that it will be difficult to achieve a fair and adequate coverage by using the grapevine loan. Could I ask for your help in this?

A state of the art review should be useful to Australian librarians as well as being of interest to our colleagues in the UK, so please spare a few moments to summarise what you are doing. A very short summary is all that is required. I can follow up individually where necessary. For your guidance, the questions I would like to see covered include:

Name and origin of the software; type of supporting hardware; number of terminals and printers available for the public; percentage of the collection accessible on the OPAC; date first installed for the public; access points; extra features that you would like to see added to your OPAC; and perhaps a sentence or two if you feel it appropriate, on user reactions and on strengths and weaknesses of the OPAC as a catalogue display medium.

If you have not yet installed, but have firm plans to do so before April, 1986, I would like to hear from you too.

Tony Mays
Deakin University, Vic. 3217

NOW IN STOCK!

Generation and Management of Small Scale Databases: papers and discussion.

ISBN 0 86804 409 1

Cost is \$12.00; \$8.00 LAA members plus 70c postage.

Available through the Library Association and the library suppliers Bennetts and Mannings.

NATIONAL BOOK COUNCIL

Please note that the new address of the National Book Council's head office is

National Book Council,
Level 5,
1 City Road,
South Melbourne 3205.
(03) 614 5111

This is the address to contact regarding the National Writers' Tours mentioned in *InCite* No 6.

DOBIS/LIBIS

La Crème de la crème

New DOBIS/LIBIS for 1985. Bibliographic pool, electronic mail, enhanced public access features and more.

DOBIS/LIBIS. THE WORLD'S FIRST CHOICE IN INTEGRATED LIBRARY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS. DEVELOPED BY IBM IN EUROPE, NOW IMPROVED BY ACI FOR AUSTRALIA.

FOR DETAILS PLEASE CALL DIANA KILLEN OR IAN McCALLUM (03) 544 8433.

ACI Computer Services