

ML/2020.9

Some thoughts on



HAVE BEEN thinking about the *Australian Library Journal* and what it means to the Library Association of Australia.

Of course, I have a strong attachment to the *Journal* because I edited it from 1959 to 1970, and in those days editing meant not only seeing that there were enough articles, news, book reviews and correspondence to fill its pages, but also proof-reading, deciding on lay-out and pasting up and visiting the printer to see it through the press.

I shall not forget how very pleased I was when the Council finally gave in and allowed me to design a new format and, later, to issue eleven times a year. (The cover was actually planned and printed during one weekend on the Piscator press at the University of Sydney and given to the printer to copy.)

I have looked at the various statements on the reasons for the publication of the *ALJ* that previous editors have made, and asked myself whether those reasons are still valid.

I have also reflected on the frequently expressed desire of Australian librarians (dating back to the 1890s), that there should be a professional journal. There were a few attempts to produce such a journal. *The Library Record of Australasia* published by the Library Association of Australasia in 1901-2 lasted for six issues. *The Library Journal* published by the Library Association of Victoria ran irregularly from 1937 to 1949. The South Australian Branch of the Australian Institute of Librarians produced a *Quarterly Bulletin* - a very modest one-off production which staggered through from 1944 to 1949. By far the most successful of journals on librarianship in Australia was the *Journal of the Librarians Association of South Australia*.

I remember how delighted we were when the *Australian Library Journal* Vol 1, No 1 appeared in 1951, edited and largely written by John Metcalfe, containing a stirring editorial plea that it was ours to make or lose. I remember also how much we South Australians, with our strong interests in book design and bibliography, wished that our Editor cared more about these things. But that was John Metcalfe.

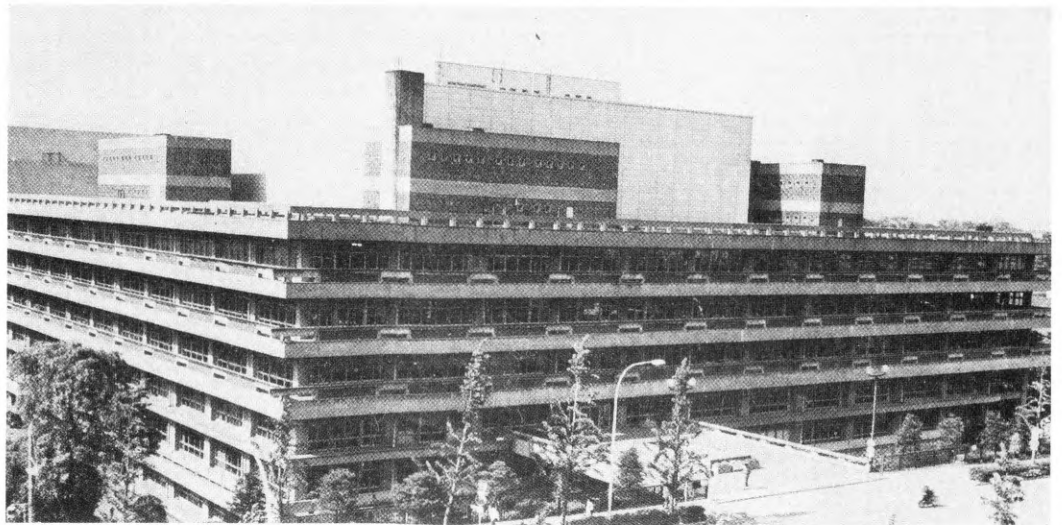
It is twenty-seven years since I stated that the Policy of the *ALJ* must be the furtherance of the objects of the Library Association of Australia through reporting news, increasing knowledge, encouraging and reporting research, encouraging professional debate and presenting Australian librarianship to an international audience.

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Japan's libraries

— the current scene —

by Christabel Mattingley



With the emphasis placed on education in Japanese society, it is not surprising that the library system is well developed. On a recent visit to Japan I visited twelve libraries, ranging from the National Diet Library in Tokyo to a local deposit collection shelved in the front room of the house of a village headman in Kawabata snow country near Takada, where I was a guest.

Host librarians were most courteous in showing me their institutions and indefatigable in arranging introductions to others. I was very conscious that it was their knowledge of English or German which made communication possible, and without which the libraries would have remained largely closed books to me.

Major development has taken place in Japanese libraries since the 1950s. Many of the 4,800 public and institutional libraries in existence before 1940 were destroyed during World War Two, and the post-war advent of American concepts and personnel had significant influence on new patterns of librarianship and library service. The democratic principles embodied in the new Japanese constitution led to two major pieces of legislation which form the basis of modern library practice - the National Diet Library Law, promulgated in 1948, and the Public Library Law enacted in 1952 and amended seven times up till 1962.

The National Diet Library, the principle library of Japan, serves a dual role, as both par-

liamentary and national library. It came into being in 1948, absorbing the former Imperial Library and parliamentary libraries.

It occupies a complete block near the National Diet building, in the heart of the government administrative office area of Tokyo. It is housed in a 24 year old six storey building with double basements, designed by Japanese architects in a public competition for the purpose. But its 172.5 kilometres of shelving is now almost full, with a collection approaching four million items, and its total floor space of 73,674 square metres is insufficient for expanding routine work and developing computer operations. An annexe to relieve the pressure is under construction on an adjoining site.

Its four principal functions are a legislative reference service to the Diet, which takes precedence; service to government agencies through a system of 35 branch libraries; service to the general public; international service and cooperation.

As the sole legal deposit library in Japan, the National Diet Library's resources are unique, with a comprehensive national coverage dating back to the foundation of the Imperial Library in 1875. Because of its parliamentary function the collection is strong in law, economics and social sciences, both Japanese and international. Special collections of modern Japanese history in manuscript and unpublished source material and a microfilm archival project of unclassified documents of the Allied Powers, 1940-1951, are significant. Books about Japan by foreign authors have always had high priority in acquisition policy, and

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Thoughts on ALJ
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It is seventeen years since, at the request of the council, I turned that editorial into a formal statement which was adopted in 1969. (1)

The *Australian Library Journal* exists to promote the objects of the Library Association of Australia and to this end it endeavours to reflect and record the Australian library scene, to contribute to the solution of problems in the theory and practice of librarianship in Australia and in other countries.

It is concerned in these matters because it wishes both to inform librarians about current happenings and discussions and also to help students in their study of librarianship. It therefore seeks to publish

1. Articles contributing to the discussion and possible solution of problems in librarianship.
2. Articles recording or discussing the development of libraries and librarianship in Australia.
3. Articles on other subjects relevant to librarianship, for example the book trade.
4. Information relevant to Australia on librarianship in other countries.
5. News.
6. Official announcements by the Association and its subordinate bodies.
7. Correspondence.
8. Reviews of professional literature and review articles on such subjects as Australian government publications.

Now that the Council has suggested that members will no longer receive the Association's *Journal* as a right but will have to pay

separately for it, let us contemplate the reasons, *apart from financial ones*, for this decision.

For this purpose the important difference between 1969 and 1986 is *InCite*. It is an excellent news sheet, because it is published so frequently, and it is the ideal vehicle for controversy, advertisements and notices of meetings. *InCite* grew out of the *ALJ* and *Happenings*, and was seen as fulfilling some of the *Journal's* functions and allowing the *Journal* to revert to a quarterly. It has fulfilled functions 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 of those objects listed above.

While I have no wish to detract from the achievement of *InCite* it should be noted that it is produced by full-time paid staff of the Association, and, it is well planned and well printed — as it should be.

Certainly *InCite* reflects and records a good deal of the Australian library scene, encourages debate through correspondence and tells its readers how they can participate in their profession. But only the journals of the Association fulfil the first three objects listed, and do we seriously think that *InCite* is appropriate to carry our whole image abroad? (Of course, that image is also conveyed by several journals, notably *Australian Academic and Research Libraries*.)

Nevertheless the *ALJ* is the only general journal on librarianship published in this country. It is the most available avenue of publication for Australian librarians (and that is important), and, together with *InCite*, it is the only thing that most members get for their subscriptions. Since the majority of members do not go to meetings, vote, or answer questionnaires, it is the only continuing education that the Association provides for them.

By ceasing to provide the *ALJ* to members

unless they pay a separate subscription, the Association will increase the unit cost to the *Journal* enormously, not only because more people won't want to pay extra (I for one shall resent it bitterly), but also because the advertising revenue will probably cease.

My judgement of the standing and the values of library associations in other countries includes a good hard look at their publications. Once I was proud of the LAA and thought that it measured up very well with an excellent *Handbook*, the *Australian Library Journal*, *InCite* and *AARL*. Today the *Handbook* has been reduced to a few pieces of ephemera, there is talk of putting the official record of library school courses into a recruiting pamphlet, and, from among the many services which the Association offers members for their subscriptions, the *ALJ* is the one to be cut out.

Council heed Publications Board

I do not think that the Publications Board is to blame for either the state of the *Handbook* or the idea of pricing the *ALJ* separately. The Board has produced some excellent publications, notably the *Australian Librarian Manual* (thanks to David Jones). Why doesn't the Council heed its own Publications Board?

It has been suggested to me that councillors do not defend the *ALJ*: do the objections costing it separately come from others? If so this is not really so surprising because the councillors are the gregarious workers for the Association: they belong to the minority — not to the great majority for whom the LAA is *only its publications and perhaps its protection of their professional credentials*. In any case, the argument that many people do not read their *ALJ* is a strange argument for librarians to espouse. If we applied it to our book collections we would indeed provide very poor information.

If the membership renewal form gave me the choice of using my subscription to join a section or group or receive the *Australian Librarian Journal* I would certainly choose the *Journal*. The only other choice that might tempt me would be to get *Australian Academic and Research Libraries* instead.

But such a choice should not have to be made. The *ALJ* is one of the most important ways in which the LAA fulfils its responsibility to improve the standards of Australian librarianship. Through it, every member has the opportunity to participate in the theories, problems and experiments which Australian librarians write about. If they don't read it, or don't like it they can ignore it, or write letters to the Editor, or send in better articles, or try to take over as Editor. But at least their Association has not left them to starve.

... appoint an editor for the new Journal ...

Finally, let me make a prediction. The policies which Council is endorsing may well mean the end of the *ALJ*. *InCite* is already getting fatter: the day will come, a few years hence when someone will suggest that the Association should publish a more scholarly journal and reduce *InCite* to the news, official announcements, correspondence, notices of meetings etc. And the Council, after a couple of years of arguing, will appoint an editor for the new *Journal*.

J.P. Whyte

(1) LAA Announcements *ALJV*18: 204, July 1969.

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