

At the President's Party

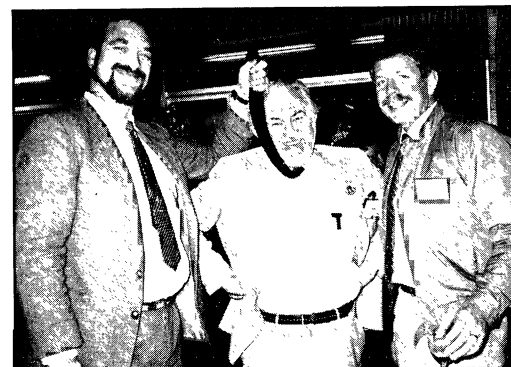
Alan Bundy held his Presidential reception on 1 September at the Senior common Room Club at the University of NSW.



The E team - the two hard-working editors of IFLA Express, Brian Foote (left) and Julian Woods



Left to right: - Derek Fielding, Helen Tait, and Past President, Peter Dawe.



The indignity of it all! Left to right: - Max Borchardt, Colin Watson and Bruce Davidson.



Left to right - Anne Hazell, Alex Byrne and the woman behind the man, First lady, Judy Bundy.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

LAA President, Alan Bundy, presented his presidential address at the Annual General Meeting on Saturday, 27 August 1988.

In its 200th year Australia has in place a co-operating national network of school, special public and academic libraries. This network has some 14,000 access points. It is a network of networks which is ill-recognised at times, even by those participating in it. It is a network with its tensions and fragilities. It is a network which requires financial and technological reinforcement to work more effectively. But it is by any definition a network, with one essential purpose, a purpose achieved by the sharing of resources, systems, knowledge and experience. That purpose is delivering, in the broadest sense, Information for the Nation.

In the 200th year of Australia there are significant moves underway which have the potential for the library and information services community throughout Australia to at long last 'get its collective act together' and assert that network's essential place in the development of Australia, and within the lives of all Australians.

These moves include:

- The name change of the LAA to the Australian Library and Information Association
- The development by the Association of a major presence in the national capital and local offices elsewhere.
- The commencement of the Association's long term Information for the Nation campaign.
- The establishment of the Australian Council on Library and Information Services
- The Australian Libraries Summit.

And we have, of course, the fact that Australia is the host country for the 1988 IFLA Conference to remind us, if reminder is needed, that our Australian concerns are also international concerns.

It is no surprise that we have occurring at one time such a range of activity; activity which has but one agenda. That agenda is to demonstrate the reality, and the potential, of library and information services for a better Australia; and to determine better ways for those services to work together as information deliverers to all Australians.

It is no surprise, because it is occurring, to a lesser or greater degree, around the world; and it is occurring in part as a response to a philosophy which says stand up and measure yourselves, or be measured by others; and justify yourselves or disappear.

It is occurring for example, across the Tasman where both of the fine Presidential addresses of NZLA, by President, Ken Porter in 1987 and Michael Wooliscroft in 1988, emphasised that political and fiscal pendulums do swing. In his address, Michael Wooliscroft quoted from a *Time* essay which says in part:

The 'era of good feeling' that Reagan presided over is ending, and people are ready for the next cycle of history, for a new period of activism and social change... The swing is away from what you would call the approach of Ronald Reagan to one that takes a more compassionate approach to those in true need.

Michael posed the question: 'Isn't it ironic for Americans to lose their faith in a free-market economy at the very time that the rest of the world, including even the socialist countries, is looking forward to the forces of market incentives and entrepreneurship?'

Trends as Ken Porter reminded us, still tend to begin in America and spread around the world and that 'as a rule when America hiccups the rest of the world has convulsions'.

So we are therefore, in Australia and New Zealand, looking to the prospect that within five years the pendulum will swing; to the prospect that identifiable, credible and well-market-

ed public goods will be supported as such. The pendulum will not, however, swing so far that we regress to the days of unthinking public demand and expenditure; of assumptions of a

In the relatively constrained economic times of recent years, the conspicuous lack of collective and individual political, bureaucratic and lay concern for the role of information in Australia's development, and the lack of recognition of the role and potential of the existing library network has been the jolt we unfortunately needed to set about getting our collective act together. The jolt we needed to position ourselves so that as that pendulum swings very slowly to a more balanced perspective of the public sector and public goods, library and information services will be seen as 'hard' rather than 'soft' options which at present they too often are. Within our profession, as in others, there are those who will always see first the reasons why something should not be attempted rather than the reasons why it should, to see the negatives rather than the positives.

However, we must not now focus on the negatives which confront us, and which will doubtless always confront us. Rather, let us focus on the many positives and their indicators, on our strengths, on our assets, and on our myriad users and supporters. Let us tell Australia that there is now in this country a sharing, a co-operating network of library and information services with 14,000 access points; let us tell Australia that over seven million people are regular users of public libraries and that many more use and depend on other libraries; that 98 percent of Australians have access to a public lending library and its resources, but that it is very unequal access restrained by hours of opening, distance, services, staffing, resources, formats, language and literacy; let us research, identify and relay the economic profit, the educational profit, the cultural and especially the multi-cultural profit, and yes, the health-giving recreational profit to be derived from that network and its components.

The economic profit to be derived from Australian industry and business using information more effectively in the international and domestic market, in particular, needs more identification and communication. Senator John Button's productive culture may still be some way off but Australia will be unwise to assume commodity dependence again.

We should be reinforcing that message by demonstrating how cost-effective libraries are and can be in supplying information for product and market development. Indeed let us identify the large return for such a small investment, in all types of libraries. Let us assert what greater return would be achieved from a small increase in that investment. Let us develop a sense of library nationalism which asserts that the National Library of Australia is not that elegant building on the side of Lake Burley Griffin in Canberra. Let us develop a sense of library nationalism and cohesion which affirms that we do, uniquely, in the quest of helping our clients, cross public and private sector boundaries, institutional boundaries, local government boundaries, state boundaries ... and as this conference itself confirms, international boundaries too. We are the great sharers but let us share that fact with Australia. At present Australia does not know.

Let us start feeling better, more confident and excited about our manifest achievement and future; and let us convey that achievement and future through the Information for the Nation campaign; a campaign to state our achieve-