

FRONT



Averill Edwards - President, ALIA

Last week I spent several hours with a photographer taking publicity shots for an article on the changing role of librarians for publication in a major national magazine. The photo session followed a telephone interview with a journalist. Yet again I was dismayed at the extent of the ignorance of others about our profession.

The young journalist was dumbfounded to discover that libraries used computers. And the photographer,

during a tour of the National Library looking for appropriate shots, was stunned as we moved from the traditional large compactus stacks to the mainframe computer and the preservation laboratories — 'this is fantastic!', he said.

Coincidentally, on the same day, a member sent me a small brochure on interest rates from Westpac in which the archetypal librarian — the scrawny old maid in glasses, with a bun — was glaring at readers while pointing to a notice on the book shelves saying 'Silence'.

The general perception and image of librarians is still based on stereotypes of the nineteenth century. How is it that we have failed to present the enormous and exciting changes that have transformed our profession this century — particularly in the last 20 years? The innovative use of technologies has enabled us to perform our tasks more effectively, but we have not been effective in transmitting the news of these changes.

How many of us talk about our jobs? Do you tell your neighbours, your relatives and friends about your work, or do you think they won't be interested? We need to get about and tell the community what we do, how and why we do it.

I am not suggesting we become bores, from whom friends cringe at approach, but rather that we should be proud of our work and say so. Allied to this must be a determined formal effort on the part of the profession in an active publicity and PR campaign to tell our communities, public, university, school or company what we do and what are our successes.

The Information for the Nation (IFTN) campaign is the Association's major effort to reach out to the community and to tell them what active, energetic and innovative places libraries are today. The campaign is directed broadly, to raise the profile of all types of library — school, public, tertiary educational, special, State or national. The campaign needs your continuing support whether this be by donation of funds or ideas or by local campaigning.

All of those involved have been surprised by the good reception of the proposals from companies, individuals and libraries that have been approached. It seems there is much latent support out there for libraries and we need to be able to tap this resource for our benefit.

In August this year in Adelaide the Association is holding a Library Promotion Seminar over 2 days. Following on from the collapse of the Australian

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meeting has been the formation of a technical committee of Standards Australia, whose task it is to formulate an Australian standard for permanent paper. In mid 1988 the committee circulated for comment the draft standard it had prepared detailing the composition of permanent papers. At its last meeting in January 1989 the committee considered the comments. It was unanimously decided that the original concept of having one standard for chemical composition and another for physical properties was impractical. A new draft standard, which is in preparation, will be circulated for comment in mid 1989.

Future developments

The work of the International Standards Organisation (ISO) will be closely monitored by the technical group of Standards Australia. Rather than develop a separate Australian standard it may be appropriate to adopt an international standard. However, at this stage it appears that the members of the ISO team are experiencing considerable difficulty in reaching agreement on the scope of the standard.

Environmental factors have been influential in creating a situation where paper manufacturers have been pressured to convert their operations from acidic to alkaline processes. The result has been the production of longer-lasting paper. Current environmental considerations could now result in a reversion to the production of poor-quality papers.

The first of these environmental factors is the current enthusiasm for the increasing use of recycled paper. Each time paper passes through the paper-making process, the average fibre length is reduced. If the concentration of short fibres is too high, paper strength is adversely affected. There is no reason why a small percentage of recycled fibre cannot be incorporated into permanent papers. Indeed many papers currently produced in the USA, which conform to the American standard, contain some recycled paper. It will be necessary, however, to restrict the amount and the quality of such recycled material.

The second factor is the use of unbleached paper. It has been known for at least a decade that chlorine bleaching produces environmentally harmful chemicals. Considerable research has been carried out on the use of environmentally safer bleaches such as hydrogen peroxide and oxygen. These bleaches have now been incorporated into the operations of many paper mills.

The recent announcement by the

Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, that a future Tasmanian pulp and paper mill could manufacture unbleached paper, which could be used by Government departments, is a worry. It cannot be categorically stated that unbleached paper is not permanent: permanence depends on whether harmful substances remain in the paper as a consequence of not bleaching. There is no doubt that the composition and properties of such unbleached papers need to be carefully examined. The specifications for any permanent paper standard should preclude the use of paper stock that has been found experimentally to be unsuitable.

The American standard is a compromise. It does not specify ageing properties, but, based on our current knowledge, paper that conforms to the standard will probably last for several hundred years. The permanence of any material obviously cannot be guaranteed. The ability of paper to survive depends on many factors including handling and storage conditions.

Australia should also be prepared to accept a compromise solution to the development of an Australian standard. We need to agree on requirements which — although not ideal from a conservation point of view — are likely to result in stable, long-lasting papers that can be produced routinely by Australian paper mills.

Jan Lyall

Director, Preservation Services
National Library of Australia



▶ Frontline from 2 • •

Library Promotion Council (ALPC), this seminar is intended to draw together all those who are interested in library promotion to discuss how the vacuum created by the demise of ALPC can best be filled. State ALPC Committees, all types of libraries, friends of libraries groups and other associations have been invited.

Initiatives that have raised the profile of libraries in the community, such as the Library Design Awards, should not be allowed to die. I urge members to support this seminar and to be part of the discussions and decisions on where we as a profession will go in the promotion of libraries and information services in Australia.

Side by side with such promotion efforts should be the fact that libraries can live up to the claims made in the promotion. It is our responsibility to ensure that our libraries are accepting the challenges of this century — to be more accountable, more productive, and better able to use new technology. Unless we do so, the community stereotype of the librarian as the reactive, withdrawn and silent hoarder will not change, and this will be our most damaging loss. The active, energetic entrepreneurial, imaginative and innovative librarian managing an efficient operation to the benefit of the community served must be our true projected image.

Averill Edwards
President, ALIA

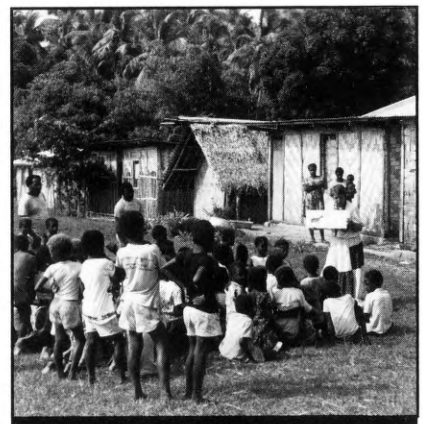


UNESCO PROJECT IN VANUATU

Joe Hallein (Head of School Librarianship, Gippsland Institute, Churchill, Victoria) and Dr Barbara Poston-Anderson (Head, Department of Information Studies, Kuring-gai College of Advanced Education, Lindfield, NSW) were in Vanuatu from 16 April to 7 May to advise teachers, librarians and school administrators on how to use education resources effectively in teaching programs, and on or-

ganising and utilising school libraries.

The program was funded by UNESCO as part of the School Libraries in Oceania project. The consultants visited schools on the islands of Efate, Tanna, Malekula and Espiritu Santo in the Republic of Vanuatu.



4 Barbara Poston-Anderson demonstrating Resource use on Malekula Island, Vanuatu. Photo by Joe Hallein