FRONT LINE

Averill Edwards — President, ALIA

One of the particular pleasures of being President of ALIA is the visits made to branches and to regional groups. It provides an opportunity to see country, as well as city, members. This has been especially important to me, coming from Canberra — a city widely reviled as the 'ivory-tower' capital.

Visits give the President the chance to see other libraries, to meet library staff at all levels, to talk to them about issues of concern to them and to the communities they serve, to see innovative services, and — as in South Australia in June — to raise more publicly the profile of specific libraries in difficulties.

On a recent trip to Melbourne I was able to talk to the librarian at Melbourne City Libraries about the services to multicultural communities, which — in areas like Flemington — have one person in three of ethnic background. Many of the leaflets describing Melbourne City Libraries and its services were in a number of languages — the Directory of Services looked superb in flowing Arabic script! Bibliographies in Spanish and in Vietnamese brought home forcefully what ethnic diversity there is now in Australia, and how flexible we as librarians must be in adapting to the new demands for our services.

A visit to the Victorian Parliamentary Library reminded me of the sound service being provided to our legislators by parliamentary libraries around the country. Meeting the needs of politicians should help to present a more positive image. Telling them what a good and cost-effective service they are getting is the next round.

Regional groups have been developed as a means of providing professional contact for librarians who live in the more distant areas of States. It is easy to forget the richness and variety of library services in remote areas. For instance, public, TAFE, special, school and university libraries are to be found in cities as diverse as Rockhampton and Port Hedland.

Attendance at State branch functions is expensive and time consuming for members who live hundreds of miles from the State capital. To encourage professional developments and contact between library and information service staff working in distant areas, ALIA has encouraged the development of regional groups that have strong contacts with their State branch.

ALIA has fifteen regional groups centred in geographically distinct areas of different States. It has been a particular pleasure for me as President to visit these groups. The welcome is warm, and the members are eager to share their news and to hear mine of the Association. *InCite* is okay, but to hear it from the horse's mouth, so to speak, is so much more interesting.

For me, it has been a necessary reminder of the breadth of our Association and its members. I have been im-

---

▶ From 9 ••

history since 1800, the arts, the world of technology and human society and the universe. There will be a cumulative index. The fledgling colony of New South Wales doesn't rate a mention in the present volume (nor does Australia, except in the article Australoids, where we read that 'Europeans first reached Australia about 200 years ago'!). Used judiciously, it will be useful for providing bite-sized and digestible chunks of history, especially, I would think, at the junior secondary school level.

World history from earliest times to 1800, edited by Harry Judge, was published by Oxford University Press in 1988 as volume three of the *Oxford illustrated encyclopaedia*. (ISBN 0 19 869135 1)

•• ••••

Building an archive

The very special physical requirements of archives buildings are the subject of Michel Duchein's *Archive buildings and equipment*, the second edition of which was published by Saur in 1988. It is a translation of Duchein's *Les batiments d'archives, construction et equipements*, itself published by the Archives Nationales de France in 1985 — so if you have read that, read no more.

As Duchein writes, much has changed since the first edition appeared in 1966, including the influx of new media, to which some — but of necessity brief — attention is given in the present work. The great strength remains in the very full treatment of key aspects in the planning and fitting out of a building. It betrays, of course, its French origins, in the wealth of examples drawn from that country, and by the numerous references to French standards and other materials. And while some basic principles do travel well, local rules and regulations (and common sense) will invalidate some of the information. An example of this is in a section on fire-resistant doors: 'In theory they should be kept permanently shut. However, for convenience, they can be kept open with a wedge but should be capable of being closed immediately if the need arises.' Has that sentence lost or gained something in the translation?

There is a good selection of illustrations, although it is a pity that they are grouped at the back of the volume, and not located appropriately throughout

the text. A model brief for the construction of provincial archives is included as an appendix. This work is of interest, not just for archivists, but also for librarians who are involved, or are likely to be involved, in the planning of major facilities for research collections.

Michel Duchein's *Archive buildings and equipment*, second edition, was published in 1988 by Saur as volume 6 in the ICA (International Council on Archives) Handbooks Series. It is available locally from Butterworths and costs $50.00. (ISBN 3 598 20278 4)

•• ••••

Hit return to continue, m'lud

'Computerised legal information services have finally arrived', declare G.W. Greenleaf, A.S. Mowbray and D.P. Lewis. And so has their very thorough *Australasian computerised legal information handbook*.

This 446-page work includes an introduction to the basic principles, with a bit of Boole, Venn diagrams, discussion of the development of legal information retrieval systems in Australasia, and very detailed introductions to CLIRS and SCALE. Other systems, including LEXIS, AUSINET, OZLINE, AUSTRALIS, ESTOPL and QUICLAW, are also described, with information on contents, examples of searches and an assessment of usefulness. There is also a directory of 'all databases containing Australian, New Zealand and common law', and exercises designed to be used with the AIRS Information Retrieval Training System.

My verdict? Good value for money at $39.00. *Australasian computerised legal information handbook* was published by Butterworth in 1988. (ISBN 0 409 49445 3)

David J. Jones

▶ From 2 ••

pressed by the significant contribution members have made to the Association and to the profession, frequently over a period of 10 years or more — arranging for continuing education courses and visits of interesting speakers, and encouraging and supporting the new members of the profession.

The life of the Association does not only occur in cities — the country members make an equally significant contribution to the libraries in their areas. In some ways there is a more significant commitment to the profession and the Association in the regional groups, partly because these cannot meet so often and partly because of the innovation that distance tends to produce.

What is equally clear to me after visits to regional groups is that the Association needs to pay much closer attention to their needs. *InCite* helps to keep a member who lives at the 'back o' Burke' up to date, and twice-a-year regional group meetings can help him/her keep up professional contacts, but there are other real needs. Do regional groups have sufficient funding to undertake their tasks effectively? Can they afford a newsletter, or some other mechanism of communication? Have they sufficient funds to provide some financial supplementation to offset petrol costs for those who have to drive for 4 hours or longer to attend a meeting? How can their undeniable needs for professional development courses be most effectively met? What changes do we need to make to the current tendering system to make it better service regional group members' needs? The reinstatement of a separate Continuing Education Officer on head office staff will help in the resolution of these questions, but branches and General Council must put their minds to them as well.

The visit program of the President of ALIA can be demanding, but the return is undeniable: for the President, the reminder of the diversity of the Association, and the focus on particular needs; for the members, the opportunity to be brought up to date on Association issues, to respond to queries, and to raise the local profile.

Averill Edwards
President, ALIA