

Information For The Nation CEREBRATION OF A NATION

THE Celebration of the Nation is over. The \$4 billion Bicentennial binge is past. Unfortunately, the economic hangover continues.

Sound familiar? No, it's not *InCite* February 1988, but the editorial in Adelaide's *Sunday Mail* of 1 January 1989. The theme of the *Mail* editorial is that Australia's economic recovery is dependent upon changing our overseas trading patterns while at the same time lowering our level of imports. In the words of the editor of the *Mail*, 'We simply cannot return to the days when an enormously inflated dollar kept the nation out of hock by ensuring the export income from primary production like wool, wheat and minerals paid for our exports. We must maintain the course of changing from our dependence on commodities to value-added exports and manufacturing ... All it takes is a little thought.'

This is exactly the message of ALIA's Information For The Nation Campaign — through a better-resourced national library and information network we can

raise ourselves from our current position as third last of the OECD countries (where we outrank only Turkey and Greece) as information exporters, and become less dependent upon imported information. (We currently import 99% of our scientific and technological information.)

This conclusion is not new to Australia's information professionals. Peter Judge and Diana Southwell (Killen) were saying just that in the debate about the need for a National Information Policy/Plan. Barry Jones was convinced too. The figures in the paragraph above were quoted again by him when he opened the Science Shop at Swinburne in October 1988. Economists like Lamberton and Mandeville from the Department of Economics at the University of Queensland state that information is an area — perhaps the only area — where Australia can and must improve its trade balance.

Nonetheless it is clear that not all of the decision makers, including those who hold the purse strings, recognise the vital role played by libraries in the provision of information to the Australian community. With the support of all members of the

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information profession and money provided by sponsorship, the objective of the IFTN Campaign is to make libraries an issue on the political agenda so that the next time NIP (or a similar program) is mooted, it will succeed because it's seen as a vote-catching issue.

Information For The Nation from Australia's libraries is the foundation of Cerebration of a Nation — a vital issue for the future of Australia and all Australians.

Information Online 89

For the fourth year in a row the Information Online Conference and Exhibition has successfully informed, challenged and entertained information professionals and many others from Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere. Shown here at the conference are Jacob Bar, one of the Keynote Speakers, and Elizabeth Swan, President of ALIA's Information Science Section. See page 3 for a detailed account of the conference.

