

FRONT LINE



Lynn Allen, President, ALIA

The present Branch Council membership in the Northern Territory is an ideal mix of new ideas and experience. It is therefore a relatively simple task as President to give direction to this group, as it approaches the issues which confront the profession beginning a new decade. Due entirely to 'local' circumstances, an experiment in decentralisation of executive authority, arose at the outset of 1990. As a result of these events, as Branch President I am working in Alice Springs, while the remainder of the Branch Council members operate from Darwin. It's an 'interesting' situation in a number of ways, but one which has so far worked relatively smoothly. Much of the credit for this success rests with Branch Secretary, whose calm use of fax machines, telephones et cetera has created a business-like atmosphere at Branch level which is being tested by these 'different' arrangements.

It was also an opportunity for Branch Council to practically reinstate its commitment to the notion of supporting members outside the Darwin area. Following a visit to Darwin and Alice Springs during 1989, by the then national President, Averill Edwards, Branch Council was approached informally by members in Alice Springs seeking advice and support towards the establishment of a Central Australian regional group. Under the guidance of Carmel Leonard and Margaret Gaff, and a group of enthusiastic members, the 'group' has now put a request to Head Office. With the full support of both Branch Council and the 1990 General Councillor for the Northern Territory, the Group should have been established by the time this issue is being read.

I am sure that members throughout Australia wherever they are working will empathise with the general

arguments which were used to support this decentralisation move. Concerns such as distance to travel to attend Branch Council meetings in capital cities, local issues of professional development, reluctance of non-members in remote areas to become involved — all these issues were raised during discussions. Hopefully, during the year the President's presence in Alice Springs will actively encourage communication between the Branch's only regional group and Branch Council.

1990 will also mark the year when Branch Council introduces new initiatives to face the issue of management training for supervisors/managers. Discussions are being held at Branch Council level to develop strategies which will address this issue. The Professional Development committee is working enthusiastically towards a position paper which will attempt to coordinate the efforts of a number of persons and institutions in an endeavour to overcome some local biases at the employer level towards management training for librarians.

On the industrial front, Branch Council will move during 1990 to introduce a librarians-in-training scheme which will provide ostensibly, recognition of the parochial problems (again created by distance) of access to librarianship training courses at the undergraduate as well as the post graduate level. A sub-committee of Branch Council is continuing the work of a 1989 initiative in this area, and already has developed a high degree of skill in the important area of industrial negotiations.

As well, Library Technicians Section members are also injecting a great deal of expertise into the area of industrial negotiations. During 1989, the technicians were successful in negotiating under an existing industrial award, a specific designation for trainee library technicians. This was done with assistance from the then new Public Sector Union, and won for trainee library technicians a number of improved conditions including a better wage for these workers.

This year all members will be affected by the Award Restructuring exercise currently being undertaken across Australia. Branch Council has been gratified to have the advice of ALIA's Industrial Information Officer via his Picket Line column in *inCite*. Tom McKeon's comments in the 19 February 1990 issue regarding the need to have members' occupational groups appropriately classified is very relevant to NT members as negotiations with unions regarding coverage continues.

It is personally gratifying to me to observe the expertise in industrial negotiations which is present in ALIA members in the Northern Territory. It has long been held by some in our ranks, that industrial issues are outside the primary 'professional' concerns of Association members. Recent events across Australia prove that nothing is further from the truth, and from a Northern Territory perspective, Branch Council is becoming equally comfortable with both roles. This trend will continue to expand and develop.

Strengths and gaps

A survey of major government publications, deposit collections and exchange agreements in Australian, New Zealand and South Pacific libraries, is being organised by the ACLIS Victorian State Committee, Government Publications Sub-Committee, which is convened by Ann Miller. The survey is designed to gather basic information on collection strengths and gaps of major government publication deposit collections or exchange agreements.

The impetus for the survey came from a resolution of the IFLA Seminar on Government Publications and Collection Development in the South Pacific Area, Canberra, September 1988. National, State, parliamentary and university libraries, plus the CSIRO and ABS libraries, are being asked to fill in a 2-page survey form for each deposit collection or exchange agreement.

The results of the survey will provide information, for the first time, on collection holdings in this area. Informed decisions on aspects of collection building, collection rationalisation and inter-library loans will be able to be made from these results. The findings of the survey will be published in book form at the end of 1990.

Further information can be obtained from Penny Scott, Government Publications Librarian, State Library of Victoria, telephone (03) 669 9887, fax (03) 663 1480.