

NUC:N — the year's best buy??

Bert Cornelius wants to share his enthusiasm for some great fiches

At \$50 for the base set of 360 microfiches plus cumulative supplements at \$115 per annum, the National Library of Australia's NUC:N (National Union Catalogue, Non-book materials) is excellent value. It deserves to be widely known, purchased and used.

NUC:N 'includes records for cartographic materials, motion pictures and video recordings, film strips, sound recordings, music scores, slides, pictorial materials transparencies, kits, manuscripts and computer software'. It also includes the specially prepared sound recordings, braille music scores and tactile maps for people with disabilities which are also listed in NUC:D, the national union catalogue of library materials for people with disabilities. Researchers, particularly of things Australian, will find especially valuable the inclusion of tens of thousands of unpublished manuscripts, oral history recordings and pictures.

Worth subscribing to

The base set (September 1990) contains all records of non-book materials added to the NBD since its inception in 1980. This covers, as well as numerous other resources nationwide, much of the map collection of the National Library and the complete holdings of the NLA's National Film and Video Lending Collection—sufficient non-book bibliographic records in themselves to make subscription worthwhile. The last supplement appeared in November 1992, and the next is expected this month.

Many experienced and dexterous practitioners can probably still do a straightforward search of a manual file in fiche, card or printed volume in less time than it takes to use a keyboard. but fiche can not provide the flexibility of Supersearch of ABN, which is very useful for some AV searches since it enables one to combine GMD (General Material Designation) with, for example, subject keywords, to extract relevant entries via information contained in the note fields. A great many AV enquiries are of the 'What do you have on...' variety

rather than the known item (citation) approach common with printed monographs and serials. An important feature of NUC:N therefore, is that it provides subject as well as author/title approach, with fairly generous cross-referencing example:

TIANANMEN SQUARE
INCIDENT, 1989

See CHINA - HISTORY -
TIANANMEN SQUARE
INCIDENT, 1989

speeding up the task of locating specific material.

To do a non-book Supersearch (\$45 per hour exclusive of the searcher's time) probably costs \$5.50 plus the cost of a dedicated line, or modem with comparatively higher telecommunication charges—a great deal more expensive than NUC:N. Because of the low initial cost and the fact that usage

cost is almost entirely the cost of the searcher's time; and the advantage of displaying for comparative purposes, up to 12 full entries on the screen simultaneously, NUC:N can be very useful as a selection/purchase tool. Microfiche technology is reliable, simple and still visually more comfortable than your average VDU. It rarely (in comparison with online technology) lets down the user.

Up-to-the-minute

CD may be the best way to go for NUC:N and a number of other NLA bibliographic products in the next few years. Meanwhile, though neither CD nor fiche can ever be as up-to-the-minute as online records, NUC:N for the time being should have a place in any library, large or small, whose clients need to look beyond the confines of their own collection for information on maps, video and other non-book resources held elsewhere in Australia. ■

A day in the life of pregnant men

*It was the radio that triggered
Thoughts about birthing,
Not really a monopoly for women,
Men have given birth for years—
To genuine, false, crazy and impractical
Ideas, thoughts, plans and dreams,
Some ending in our parliament,
Others in gaol, or both;
Let's hope that future pregnant men
Can do better in what they spawn
Or at least equal the best of values
That seem to be so far away.
We do not want multiple births.
Just one good idea at a time
To put the nation back on track,
To restore our faith in those who lead,
No more, no less than that.
A good midwife is essential
Or obstetrician if you prefer,
In any event a 'minder'
Who is motivated by service,
Not self-service, but community,
Then and only then
Will mankind and womankind
Really equate in this fundamental function.*

Jeff Hazell ■