teacher-librarians, or systems-librarians. As our industry grows, the list gets bigger and bigger and their constant common denominator is the genus *librarian.*

My expectations for 1995

I have two theories I'd like to see proved:

1. *A library staffed by people who love their jobs results in users who can't get along without their library.* ALIA can help here by fostering a culture of switched-on, proactive members. It can be a voice, a sounding board, an initiator... an Association you can take pride in! Past criticisms that ALIA had no relevance to the daily worklife are just that... a thing of the past. ALIA will be providing useful, relevant and timely support in all areas of your working life.
2. *Information is power — but only when it is shared.* We have given lip service to the concept of the 'clever country'. The government has thrown two carrots — *One Nation* and *Creative Nation* — it's time to show the teeth of our composite command of the country's intellectual property, and the good uses to which we can put that collective power.

My final expectation in the term of my presidency is to encourage an Association that does a better job of inspiring the involvement and reflecting the views of its diverse membership.

I feel quite strongly that the Association is its membership, not the National Office nor the General Council. The General Council and National Office work for the members, *not vice versa.* Your General Council is a representative body that you have elected to lead your Association — the more demands you make on them the better they will lead!

We are already seeing healthy signs of increased member involvement, in that several States this year have actually held elections rather than co-opting people to hold office.

I hope General Council can initiate mechanisms that cater for better methods of canvassing member opinion; that allow active participation by a greater percentage of members, rather than those precious few who are able to attend state Branch Council meetings or are segregated into divisional activity.

I will be contacting all Branch Presidents to discuss some ideas I have and gain input from them on situations that exist within individual States.

For you, the members, I have two hopes over the coming year. One is that you won't be bashful about breaking out and '*strutting your stuff*' for the greater good of our library profession.

My other hope is that when considering your membership notice, the operative question will be whether you afford *not* to renew it! ■

[Next month: the workings of General Council and how you can make your voice heard.]

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The Australian Conference & Exhibition Diary

Cultural Ministers' Council:

Focus on libraries

In June 1993, Des Stephens, the State Librarian at the State Library of Queensland presented a proposal to the Australian Cultural Ministers Council (CMC) to establish a national libraries working group. The stated aim of the group was to review current trends in library development, to examine demand for library service, to consider the implications of the rapid advances in information technology, and to advance national strategies for developing a model of library service in tune with current and projected national educational, cultural, social and community goals.

Future development of library services must take place in a context which recognises the major economic, social and cultural power shifts which are occurring as we move towards a post-industrial information-based global economy. In the economy of the future, access to information will be a pre-condition to personal autonomy and peoples' information needs will increase as society becomes increasingly complex.

There will be major equity and social justice implications arising from the above developments and, as a result of the cost of accessing information using new information and communications technology. Leaving aside issues such as training, literacy in general and information literacy in particular, not everyone will be able to afford the basic technology to access the networks as they emerge.

These are the issues that have been so effectively canvassed by ALIA and other groups with the Broadband Services Expert Group, Australian Science and Technology Council, Deputy Prime Minister Brian Howe, and Arts and Communications Minister Michael Lee.

It is fortuitous that the establishment of the Libraries Working Group has come in this climate of interest in issues of relevance to public libraries.

Representation on the Libraries Working Group is drawn from a broad regional and organisational base and includes ALIA, ACLIS, The National Library, State libraries, local government libraries and Arts ministries. The Libraries Working Group is required to provide the Council with a number of interim reports and a final brief strategic report by June 1996.

The Libraries Working Group has the following terms of reference:

- To explore the opportunities for the most effective contribution by the National, State and public library sectors in meeting the information and cultural needs of Australians. Issues to be addressed include their place in the overall library/information infrastructure, and the relationship with other key information providers, especially within the education sector and with other collecting institutions;
- To establish patterns of information seeking behaviour and recreational reading by library users and non-users, through surveys and other means, which will inform future library planning;
- To examine the use of state and public libraries by all types of students;
- To determine the benefits to the community generally of:
  (a) the state libraries, and
  (b) the respective public library networks;
- To examine the future impact of information technology on service delivery;
- To consider the need for Governments to establish a minimum level of service on a national basis in the interest of social justice and equity;
- To evaluate the extent to which state and public libraries can generate funding from sources other than State and Local Government.

The project is being managed by a number of research teams with four major research projects proposed over the life of the project:

(i) quantitative and qualitative market research concerning the use and non-use of libraries... A contract was awarded to survey and report on public attitudes towards libraries, through a national survey conducted in late October 1994. A report on its findings will be presented to the Libraries Working Group and a draft report will be submitted to the April meeting of the CMC Standing Committee.

(ii) specific research relating to the distribution of information technology in libraries and its possible future application ... research in this area is being co-ordinated by Dr Alison Crook and Ms Robyn Collins. Dr Crook and Ms Collins will be recommending a course of action to use the public library network to provide public library access to electronic information including access to the Internet.

(iii) research into income generation options. The short term of this project is to audit and describe current revenue raising practice throughout Australia. Further work will be undertaken on this project when attitudinal information towards user-pays issues is available from the national survey.

(iv) broader research concerning the actual and potential role of the state and public libraries. The process for initiating work on this project will be largely determined by the findings from the preceding three projects.

There have been three seminal reports on public library services over the past sixty years, the Munn Pitt report published in 1935, *Australian Libraries: a survey of conditions and suggestions for their improvement* (Melbourne, Australian Council for Educational Research, 1935); the Horton report *Public libraries in Australia: report of the committee of inquiry into public libraries* (Canberra, AGPS, 1976) and of course the Jones report *Australia as an information society: the role of libraries/information networks. Report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee for long-term strategies* (Canberra, AGPS, 1991).

Unfortunately, only the Munn Pitt report has had a significant national impact in terms of positive outcomes for the development and advancement of public libraries despite the high quality of the other two reports.

It should be noted that there has never been a national survey of public attitudes towards library services in this country. It is to be hoped that the provision of objective research data together with recognition of the varied and complex role of libraries in a rapidly changing environment will lead to positive outcomes from research undertaken by the Libraries Working Group. The Cultural Ministers Council may well provide the necessary forum for the advancement of a truly integrated and progressive national library policy. ■

...access to information will be a pre-condition to personal autonomy and peoples' information needs will increase as society becomes increasingly complex

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