

From the tropics to the snow

Celia Otley, Operations North — NT Department of Education

Imagine leaving a steamy Darwin day and twenty-four hours later arriving to snow-capped mountains. That was my experience when I left Darwin for a year-long teaching exchange in Vancouver, Canada.

Schools in Canada differ in many ways from those in Australia but in many ways are the same. Teachers face the same problems — too many children in classes, lack of finance, and curriculum change. Administratively, Canadian schools are very different. They are run by local school boards which control staffing, budgets and resources while the provincial Ministry of Education organises the curriculum.

It was quite a shock for me

to go back to a manual library borrowing system. I had forgotten all about cards without books and books without cards. By now the school should have introduced Dynix as the automated library system and it was my job to prepare for automation.

All new library resources were centrally catalogued, either by the supplier or by the School Board's curriculum resources processing centre.

Paper-back fiction was not catalogued which was frustrating as the students generally preferred to read paperback books. The fact that paperbacks were shelved separately (and not necessarily in alphabetical order) also made book promotion a little difficult.

The students really enjoyed the many Australian books I had taken with me and I am sure the local bookshop's profits soared with my promotion of Australian authors — I think if I had a dollar for every Paul Jennings title they sold it would have paid my return airfare!

Of course my trip was not all work and no play. During the nine-week summer holidays I managed to travel through the greater part of Canada as well as parts of the United States. All too soon it was time to pack up and say goodbye to the many Canadian friends I had made.

I returned to the tropics with many wonderful memories of a terrific year on exchange. All I have to do now is save up for the next one... ■



Australian
Library and
Information
Association

John Metcalfe was responsible for establishing the basis of the profession of librarianship in Australia and was the dominating influence in the profession in this country until his retirement in the 1960's. John Metcalfe and his contribution to librarianship and library education are commemorated by the Australian Library and Information Association through the Metcalfe Medallion.

The award is for the most outstanding essay or other piece of work on a topic of interest to library and information services and consists of a plaque and a year's membership of the Association. Students are invited to submit entries for this award.

To meet the criteria for this award entries for the ALIA Metcalfe Medallion should:

- be submitted in triplicate by a student undertaking a first-award course in library and information science;
- be an essay or other piece of work of up to 5000 words in length of interest to library and information science;
- be written in a form or style appropriate for publishing in an ALIA journal or as an ALIA Press publication;
- indicate competence in the analysis, evaluation or synthesis of data, information or previously published material;
- include a declaration stating that the entry is the student's own work.

Entries close on 15 December and should be sent to:

Metcalfe Medallion
Australian Library and Information Association
PO Box E441 Kingston AET 2004
Phone (06) 285 1877 Fax (06) 282 2249
E-mail enquiry@alia.org.au
URL <http://www.alia.org.au/alia/awards.html>

The Metcalfe Medallion

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