

Your voice

Good sense?

Following the transfer of the ISBN Agency from the National Library of Australia to DW Thorpe, we are now advised that DW Thorpe will levy an administrative fee for allocation of blocks of ISBNs and a fee of \$50 for the allocation of an ISBN within twenty-four hours. Until recently it was possible to speedily receive an ISBN and a cataloguing in publication from one agency — the National Library of Australia. The separation of the ISBN agency is bad enough, requiring as it does double handling. However to now have a charge imposed for ISBNs can surely only have one consequence — fewer books will have ISBNs and fewer will have CIP entries because the National Library of Australia will not provide a CIP entry without advice of the ISBN.

None of this makes good national bibliographic sense — or have I missed something?

Alan Bundy,
University of South Australia

Free to a good home

The former IFLA Clearing House for Australia has the following near

complete sets of items freely available to any library or individual willing to pay transportation costs: *IFLA conference papers 1977–1995*; *IFLA Journal 1977–c.1996*; *Information Hotline 1970–c.1989*; and Part 2 1972–1974; *Library Automation Research and Consulting Association series 1973–1974*; *LARC Reports v5–v7*; *LARC Newsletter v4:5–v5:4*; *Network v1:2, 5, 6*; *World survey series v1, 3–4, 5, 9–11*.

Please contact Edward Reid-Smith, 2 Salmon Street, Wagga Wagga 2650, ph 02 6921 4759; ereidsmi@postoffice.csu.edu.au. The material is otherwise due for recycling.

Edward Reid-Smith,
Wagga Wagga

Your voice

Your letters on any issue of relevance to the library and information sector are welcomed.

All letters should be addressed to the *inCite* editor and may be e-mailed to incite@alia.org.au, or faxed to 02 6282 2249, or posted to: Your voice, ALIA, PO Box E441, Kingston ACT 2604. Please include your name and postal address with your letter or e-mail.

IBM awarded \$13.8 million National Library contract

The National Library of Australia affirmed its commitment to the national sharing of library resources with the announcement that it has awarded the contract for the nation's new bibliographic system to IBM Australia and IBM Global Services Australia.

Based on AMICUS software, the new system will provide significant benefits to nearly 1400 libraries and all who use them. The \$13.8 million contract is for six years and is expected to be in operation Australia-wide within a year.

Librarians will use AMICUS to search, create, retrieve, manage and share bibliographic information, including books, magazines, pictures, maps, CDs, newspapers, sound recordings, oral histories and computer files. Collectively known as the National Bibliographic Database (NBD) and currently operated through the Australian Bibliographic Network (ABN) service, this invaluable national asset contains more than thirteen million bibliographic records and twenty-seven million holding statements showing locations in Australian libraries.

Announcing the agreement, NLA director-general, Warren Horton, said: 'Australian libraries operate in a highly co-operative resource-sharing environment. The NLA's establishment of the ABN network in 1981 was a ground-breaking co-operative computer network which gave the library community a new model for accomplishing national tasks. The new system, as its successor, will become the backbone of our capacity to provide immediate access to the knowledge stored in our libraries. We are delighted to have IBM as partners in this venture.'

ing to us with your views or by participating in one of the forums being organised by your branch or regional group.

While the exciting and time-consuming task of organisational change is underway we must be careful not to be deflected from so many of the important programs that are critical to maintaining our success. Although a federal election is not required until early 1999, it is very likely that we will see the election held around the middle of this year. We are already preparing our electoral action strategy with a view to lobbying as many candidates as possible during the campaign.

Our \$100 000 Online Public Access Initiative (OPAI) project is progressing well with Internet training programs for remote Aboriginal communities already taking place. The strength in our OPAI project derives from the co-operative arrangements we have developed with, in particular, the state/territory library services in Queensland, the Northern Territory and South Australia and also with Aboriginal communities.

ALIA has commissioned a labour-market study which is the most comprehensive survey of Australian librarians' working conditions that has ever been undertaken. More than 1600 ALIA members were invited to take part in the survey which was conducted for us by the Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training (ACIRRT). A magnificent response rate of more than seventy-five per cent was achieved — a remarkable result for a primarily postal-based project. The survey sample was very carefully constructed by ACIRRT to ensure that the distribution of library workers was statistically reflected, in terms of geographic location, industry sector and other variables. The information obtained constitutes a detailed snapshot of the way in which library and information work is being organised across Australia. A full survey report will be published soon in ALIA's Occasional Papers series and will form the basis for further employment policy development by the Association.

1998 is the year of our Adelaide biennial conference (25–28 Octo-

ber) with the theme *Libraries: pathways to knowledge*. This is also the theme for Australian Library Week (3–9 May 1998) and we are delighted that Lois O'Donoghue, former chair of ATSIC, has agreed to provide the Australian Library Week Oration on 29 April. Imaginative and artistic promotional materials are in the final stages of development.

Perhaps our greatest endeavours in 1998 will be devoted to education and training where the need for radical approaches to meeting the changing workplace demands are required. This was the message emerging from our Education Forum held late last year and the ALIA Board of Education has given this issue its top priority for this year.

It seems certain that this will be a year of great activity and innovation for ALIA. The task ahead for all of us is to ensure that we continue to work effectively on behalf of the library community while undertaking thoughtful and responsible organisational reform.