

Averill Edwards

A library career

Librarians can be assured of their future in a digital information world by marketing their skills as information managers and through keeping a visible professional presence with library users. 'Librarians are trained to evaluate information sources and this skill will continue to be needed by others, if they know we have it.'

This is the view of a former ALIA president, Averill Edwards, who retired recently from the National Library of Australia's Information Services, Readers' Services Branch. In her thirty-eight years in libraries, she made career choices which mirror the history of Australian library service development and expansion. Her ability to seize opportunities also reflects the pioneering spirit of her family — she is a fourth-generation Australian and New Zealander, whose ancestors include Thomas Adam after whom Adamstown, New South Wales, is named, and a grandparent who built the first chalet at Mt Cook, New Zealand, and then migrated to Australia to build the first challet at Mount Kosciuszko.

After graduating from Sydney University with a BA and Diploma of Education, she taught history and English and developed two large libraries at the Sydney Girls and French's Forest High Schools at a time when the concept of teacher-librarians and the importance of siting libraries within schools were just becoming a part of government policy.

Averill gained a Diploma of Librarianship from the University of New South Wales and joined the National Library of Australia in 1969.

Her career has included management of the National Library's interlibrary loans and document delivery, library training, selection for the print collections and the delivery of information services.

From 1975 to 1978 Averill represented the National Library in North America, from the Australian Embassy in Washington. Initially she found discrimination against women among lower-echelon embassy staff. The two ambassadors, however — Nicholas Parkinson followed by Alan Renouf — fully supported her in the intensive liaison work she did with the major libraries of Canada and the United States, including the Library of Congress and the National Library of Medicine. Ambassador Renouf took the unprecedented step of writing to the then national librarian, Dr Chandler, about the outstanding contribution which Averill made during this period which saw the development of the Medlars service and the adoption of the Washington Library Network as the basis for ABN. For the latter Averill pays tribute to the work of former national and parliamentary librarian, Alan Fleming, and a former university librarian of the University of

Western Australia, Arthur Ellis. She also monitored the overseas trends in the management of special collections, such as music and oral history, and the use of microform as a document preservation medium.

She was an early participant in the Public Service Board's Executive Development Scheme, working at the Australian Schools Commission, Department of Business and Consumer Affairs and the Board itself in policy development and Cabinet briefings.

She took this experience back to the National Library of Australia, occupying a series of policy secretariat positions involving government liaison, ministerial briefings, AACOBS, the public information program and support for the Library's Council and the Executive Committee. She has also been chief librarian, secretariat, National Film and Sound Archive.

Her voluntary service to the profession includes the presidency of ALIA in 1989. She managed a series of changes which included a name change (from the Library Association of Australia, to the Australian Library and Information Association), a move from Sydney to Canberra, the building of its present quarters at ALIA House, Napier Close, Deakin and a change to its Charter and objectives. During her presidential year, the Association developed standards for school, prison and public libraries and put the publications program on a sound financial footing. In her closing Frontline for *inCite* in December 1989, Averill wrote:

'If ALIA is to continue to prosper, it must decide now what it wants to be like in ten years' time and start to set some short- and long-term goals and to devise strategies to achieve those goals.'

... words which echo ten years later, after a year of organisational change with the merger of ACLIS (which Averill also served as executive officer for a short time)

For the last five years Averill has been responsible for the delivery of National Library of Australia information services, from printed materials to clients on- and off-site. She praises the leadership of her divisional head, Pam Gatenby, in planning the expansion of services by providing readers with computer access to Kinetica, Dialog and CD-ROM collections.

Among other activities, Averill has been dedicated to serving the Uniting Church in various capacities, including membership of the Canberra Region Presbytery Committee and convenor of their planning and research committee. She is a firm supporter of women clergy. She continues this commitment to her church as well as her long-term passion for tennis. Her friends and colleagues hope she will also continue to give the library profession the benefit of her experience and wisdom. ■



... from previous page

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23/3 Technology 2000. *The Melbourne Branch of the Institute for Information Management will present its popular Victorian Vendor Showcase '99. A day-long event featuring presentations from the nations leading providers of information management systems and technology. Further details: ph 03 9662 9619, iim@ozemail.com.au or visit www.iim.org.au*

• **24/3 Vic Library Technician section.** *Employment prospects for library technicians in the library and information industry. Guest speaker: Margie Anderson, Library Locums. RMIT — Library Conference room, Swanston Street. 6 for 6:30pm. ALIA members free, \$5 non-members. Contact: Kerrie Kelly, ph 02 9669 9721, kerriek@slv.vic.gov.au RSVP by 22/3.*

• **27/3–27/11 Vic School Libraries section meeting.** *Meeting dates: 27/3, 24/4, 22/5, 26/6, 24/7, 4/9, 16/10, 27/11 — AGM. Statewide School Resource Centre, 217 Church Street, Richmond, 9:30am. Contact: Maelor Himbury, ph 03 9336 2555, fx 03 9367 9361, maelor@melbpc.org.au*

• **31/3 Vic Library Technician section Committee meeting.** *Everyone is welcome! State Library of Victoria, Level 2 function room, 6pm. Please meet Kerrie in the Swanston Street foyer at 6pm. Contact: Kerrie Kelly, ph 02 9669 9721, kerriek@slv.vic.gov.au*

• **9/4 Vic Library Technician section.** *Student Library Technician Conference Grant deadline. Closing date for the essay competition. Contact Kerrie Kelly, ph 02 9669 9721, kerriek@slv.vic.gov.au or your library studies department for applications forms, or visit: <http://www.alia.org.au/sections/libt/vic/conference.grant.html>*

• **12/4–6/12 Home Library Services SIG meeting.** *10am, Eltham Library, Panther Place (off Main Road), Eltham. Meetings dates: 12/4, 7/6, 2/8, 4/10, 6/12. Contact: Marie McMahon, ph 03 9401 0725.*

• **21/4 Vic Library Technician section.** *Student Library Technician Conference Grant judging. Committee members only please! State Library of Victoria, Level 2 seminar room, 6pm. Please meet Kerrie in the Swanston Street foyer at 6pm. Contact: Kerrie Kelly, ph 02 9669 9721, kerriek@slv.vic.gov.au*

• **24/5 Vic School Libraries section.** *Professional development activity: Jamie McKenzie. Venues and cost to be advised. Contact: Maelor Himbury, ph 03 9336 2555, fx 03 9367 9361, maelor@melbpc.org.au*

• **26/6 Vic School Libraries section.** *Professional development activity: current issues i.e. 'bite', curriculum resourcing and VCE. Venues and cost to be advised. Contact: Maelor Himbury, ph 03 9336 2555, fx 03 9367 9361, maelor@melbpc.org.au*

• **3/7 Vic Library Technician section.** *Melbourne library tours. This year the tours will include the State Library of Victoria, a guest speaker and a choice of special/academic libraries. Lunch will be available. For further details contact: Kerrie Kelly, ph 02 9669 9721, kerriek@slv.vic.gov.au*

• **4/9 Vic School Libraries section.** *Professional development activity: Copyright and electronic publishing. Venues and cost TBA. Contact: Maelor Himbury, ph 03 9336 2555, fx 03 9367 9361, maelor@melbpc.org.au*

WA

• **3/3 WA Local Studies section.** *Visit to new Midland Library, Local History Collection and restored Midland Town Hall, 6pm. Contact: Julie Zuvella, ph 08 9386 6230, fx 08 9389 8742, jzuvella@nedlands.wa.gov.au for details.*

continued next page...