

The Australian Library Journal

Library Technician Courses

I comment on the introduction of Jean Hagger's article, *Library Technician Courses: the role of the Victorian Branch of the LAA*, in which the statement is made:

Accounts published to date concerning the establishment of courses for library technicians imply that it all began in 1970.^{1,2}

Jean then quotes the following from Edward Reid-Smith, from a paper delivered at IFLA Council, 1981, describing it as 'closer to the mark':

In Australia, the current almost uniform provision of courses for library technicians owes its origins to a dedicated group from the state of Victoria in the late 1960s.

As the author of one of the articles criticised by Jean for inaccuracy, I wish to set the record straight. Apart from personal considerations, I would wish to assure those Victorians who gave so many of us our grounding in the history and practicalities of the library technician movement in Australia, at the Library Technicians Workshop, Melbourne, 1976, that their efforts were not entirely wasted.

In the paper referred to by Jean Hagger, delivered in Canberra in 1978 and published in *ALJ* in December 1979, I said —

It is, therefore, a considerable debt of gratitude that the library profession of Australia owes to those few Victorians who did something about library technician courses back in 1970 — Wes Young, Margery Ramsay, and the other members of the Library Course (Vocational) Standing Committee of the Technical Division of the Victorian Education Department.

That statement is certainly capable of the interpretation Jean chose to give it.

There is, however, at least one other published account that Jean seems to have missed. In a subsequent paper, 'Issues of library technicians in the future,' delivered at the LAA-NZLA Conference, Christchurch, January 1981, given limited photocopy distribution then, and subsequently published, twice, (i) in the Christchurch Conference Proceedings published in June, 1981, and (ii) in *One librarian's point of view: a collection of papers by Ted Flowers, 1958-1981*, Newcastle, Auchmuty-Library, 1981, published in June, 1981, I had the good sense to say —

It is, therefore, a considerable debt of gratitude that the library profession of Australia owes to those few Victorians who did something about library technician courses back in the late sixties, finally translated thinking into action, and commenced the Whitehorse course in 1970.

I hope that this goes some way towards reassuring Jean and your readers that some of us do have some understanding of the Australian library technician history and of the debt we owe to the originators of whom, of course, Jean was one.

I am, needless to say, grateful to Jean for her reference to Edward Reid-Smith's IFLA paper, which seems to reinforce the view that there is widespread recognition of the pre-1970 efforts to mount the course.

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The Keane Chronology

It was with appreciation that I read the article by M. Keane in Vol 31 No. 2 May 1982 and the chronology Vol 31 No. 3 August 1982, on the

In view of the quarterly frequency of the *Australian Library Journal* and the fact that correspondence received from members concerning articles in the journal is often of a highly contemporary nature, it has been decided to use the greater frequency of *InCite* to publish these letters with a greater degree of immediacy. In order to preserve the record, the letters will be reprinted in the earliest subsequent issue of *Australian Library Journal*.

development of education for librarianship in Australia between 1896 and 1976. My interest and pleasure were augmented when I received a telephone call from friend and colleague Miss J. Hagger, first Head of the Department of Librarianship at R.M.I.T., who made several favourable comments about the two articles. Firstly, thank you Maureen Keane for your valuable contributions. Secondly, for the sake of historical accuracy, I promised Miss Hagger to write to make corrections to some errors in the chronology.

1. The chronology indicates that in 1968 R.M.I.T. introduced 'a joint four-year course in teacher-librarianship with Melbourne Teachers College'. In fact, as Miss Hagger pointed out to me, R.M.I.T. did not introduce that course. The course was introduced by the Secondary Teachers College as a four-year course viz *Higher Diploma of Teaching (Secondary) Teacher-Librarianship*. R.M.I.T. was involved with the librarianship components of that course. The other academic and professional education studies were conducted at the Secondary Teachers College. R.M.I.T. admitted these students to their existing 2 year Associate Diploma in Librarianship, and the total course was conducted in that way until 1970, when the librarianship components were then taught by the staff from the Department of Librarianship at Melbourne Teachers College. It would be accurate to say that the Higher Diploma of Teaching (Secondary) Teacher-Librarian course, taught by the two neighbours, Melbourne Teachers College and Secondary Teachers College became the first course taught jointly by the two colleges and played a major role in paving the way for the later amalgamation of these Colleges firstly as Melbourne College of Education and now as Melbourne State College. The updated and revised course, still in existence is now known as the Bachelor of Education (Librarianship) program.

2. The chronology, p. 22, lists for 1971 some further developments. The nomenclature of the courses quoted in this section of the chronology is somewhat inaccurate and confusing. With respect to Melbourne College of Education (now Melbourne State College) the facts are as follows. As mentioned above, in 1971, the new program of Higher Diploma of Teaching (Secondary) Librarianship course, then conducted by the two neighbours on the Grattan Street site, (now B.Ed. Librarianship) was recognised by the LAA.

The one-year post-graduate course Diploma of Librarianship (now Graduate Diploma in Librarianship) also gained recognition from the Library Association of Australia in 1971.

I am the first to admit that rapid changes in the official names of institutions and in the nomenclature of qualifications etc., especially over the past 15 years, can cause confusion, and it is for this reason that I wish to present the facts outlined above.

Once again, thank you Maureen Keane for your valuable contribution.

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Inter-Library Loans / Document Supply in Australia

Both Ian Douglas and Maurice Line replied in the August issue of the *Journal* to my contribution in the February issue.

I would like, at this stage, to comment only briefly and generally and to defer any longer more detailed response until there has been

further debate on the matter and until the possible alternatives for a network of document supply in Australia have become clearer.

Douglas, Line and I all agree on the basic issue — *something* must be done to establish an effective coordinated network — the argument is *what* should be done.

First, I would make the point that my solution was proposed as a hypothesis only and it was hoped that debate on this important and chaotic issue would be stimulated. This has happened and, I hope, will continue.

Since my article was written, we have moved some way towards an interim solution. The recommended standard fee for the inter-library provision of a photocopy has been raised from \$1 to \$3 and this has taken some of the burden from net suppliers.

I can understand Line's discomfort with the apparent dichotomy between the first and last parts of my article. The first part gave a generally agreed description of Australia's present condition. The second part dealt with much more arguable solutions to the problem.

I agree with Douglas and Line that narrow pure theoretical logic (especially related to the U.K. situation) points towards a single national document supply centre which is "a libraries' library" but it ignores considerations of 'on site' access. In addition, the cold hard practicalities of economics and cost-benefit, as well as consideration of *all* the facets of information transfer, indicate the need for multiple centres providing national (or regional) document supply together with on-site access and reference/information services.

But it may well be that we can have two bob each way in the argument of one or several document supply centres because of the development of the Australian Bibliographic Network which will provide an on-line union catalogue and electronic message switching — centralised records and message coordination on the one hand and coordinated regional dispersal of textual resources on the other.

I am convinced that on-site access to extensive resources is necessary in Australia's large centres of population and that it is wasteful and unnecessary to duplicate them yet again in a single national 'libraries' library'.

As Douglas points out, there are dangers of conflict and difficulties of coordination but these can be minimised if financial compensation is sufficient to provide for adequate staff, dedicated photocopying machines, etc. I am confident that, in this case, providing on-site access through existing institutions would not delay provision of documents to remote users by more than 24 hours at the most.

I repeat — my proposal represented a hypothesis which outlines one possible long-term solution. A second would be regions (possibly consisting of each state) which achieved 80% self-sufficiency through *regional* document supply centres which accepted responsibility in return for contractual compensation, a *national* document supply centre providing material in the 80-95% range and with the final 5% of requests being sought overseas. A third possibility is, of course, the single national document supply centre which is a 'libraries' library', but I want to see how ABN develops and the results of the CTEC inter-library loan survey before I choose finally.

I would welcome more debate (either through the pages of the *Journal* or direct) before I respond in more detail.

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