



## The Paddington Bear book affair

It would indeed have been ironic had Mick Young been dismissed over Paddington Bear, the children's book hero. Ten years ago, when Mick Young first became our Member for Port Adelaide, there were next to no book resources available to the children, or their parents!, in the whole of our western suburbs. Certainly there was no Paddington Bear! In fact, there was only one public library to serve the whole 250,000 of us!

A bipartisan action group known as CROW (Concerned Residents of the Western suburbs of Adelaide), of which I am a founder member, pointed this out to our then new MHR, and he was successful in pressuring the Whitlam Government hierarchy into establishing the Horton Inquiry into Public Libraries in Australia. The main recommendation of the Horton Report was that significant federal aid should be made available for Australia's public libraries.

So far federal aid has not yet happened but the actual process of the Horton Inquiry raised the consciousness of our State and local governments to such a degree that our CROW communities now have no less than 13 public library services, as against 1 in 1974. Admittedly, these services are very embryonic in their range, and therefore are in desperate need of federal aid, but they are still much better than nothing, which is what our children had ten years ago.

Now, thanks to Mick, there are 10 Paddington Bear titles in the Port Adelaide Public Library alone!

*Arthur Mortimer,  
Largs Bay, SA*

## Children are still reading

I write regarding the item Children and Reading (*Incite* 14 July, p.5), which begins by stating that: the question on the minds of librarians is 'where have all the children gone?'. This librarian can answer with confidence that in Fremantle the children continue to go to their public library.

And it seems that all over WA public libraries are increasingly well used by children, in spite of the multifarious demands on their leisure time. This is recorded in the Statistical Bulletins of the Library Board of WA. In its issue No. 1 (1980/81) the recorded children's book loans total 1,485,511. In its issue No. 3 (1982/83) they total 1,773,418.

Your item also states that there is declining interest in reading for leisure, particularly in the 10-12 years range. I have seen no evidence of a decline in reading for leisure. Experience at Fremantle and at neighbouring public libraries suggests the opposite. Junior fiction loans have increased, which would seem to indicate that recreational reading is alive and well.

As far as I know, no public library in WA is able to keep statistics on the usage by specific age groups.

While we should all wish to promote reading and library use by children, we shouldn't use false alarms and assumptions to justify the promotion. Rather, we should shape our attitudes, and make sound decisions, based on real data.

*B. L. McGeever, ALAA,  
City Librarian  
Fremantle City Library*

**Editor's note: The item in question came from a press release issued by the Library and Information Service of Western Australia.**

### DIRECTORY OF SPECIAL LIBRARIES - 6th EDITION

Order now at Special Pre-publication Price

**Members' Price**  
Refill and Cover ..... \$36  
Refill Only ..... \$32

**Non-Members' Price**  
Refill and Cover ..... \$49  
Refill Only ..... \$45

Send order to LAA, 376 Jones Street, Ultimo NSW 2007

## PRESERVING OUR BOOKS

A VACUUM chamber originally designed by space scientists to help simulate the intense solar radiation that bombards satellites in orbit is being used to breathe life into decaying library books.

The machine from the Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland, has been used by the Library of Congress in Washington to test a process of de-acidifying books. Most paper used in book production today has a high acid content which causes rapid disintegration.

The average life of a modern book may be 25 years or less. It's a problem that is alarming librarians and archivists throughout the world who see priceless collections literally crumbling before their eyes.

Microfilming the books is one solution, but the cost is enormous. The space chamber seems to be one way in which books can be rejuvenated and kept in use.

Books are packed in the chamber 15,000 at a time. All the air and moisture is extracted and a gas called diethyl zinc (DEZ) is introduced. The gas reacts on the cellulose fibres of book pages, stabilising their chemical structure.

The books are left in the space chamber for six days as the surplus DEZ is removed and air and moisture gradually reintroduced. Afterwards the books should have an added shelf life of some 200 years.

The saving operation in the United States is a desperate one, but it barely scratches the surface of the problem, and countless thousands of items are being lost to future generations.

In Australia the need for a book and manuscript rescue operation is no less crucial, and librarians and archivists are concerned at the lack of interest in the problem shown by many government authorities. A national approach to conservation was one of the subjects addressed by librarians and archivists at the LAA/NZLA Conference in Brisbane.

**LAA HANDBOOK 1984 EDITION**  
— LIMITED STOCK AVAILABLE —  
**\$18.00 non-members; \$12.00 LAA members**  
**Order Now from LAA Office!**

# URICA LIBRARY SYSTEM

AWA's computer systems use relational data base techniques which are particularly suitable for handling variable length bibliographic information.

- AWA offers a turnkey system based on a single supplier philosophy — the hardware, software and service are all supplied by AWA.
- Upon a simple instruction, the terminal connected to URICA may be readily switched to access the Australian Bibliographic Network.
- URICA Systems are suitable for virtually any size of library, handling from 1 to over 200 on-line terminals, and over a million on-line bibliographic records.
- The flexibility of URICA makes it suitable for all types of libraries, including public, technical, corporate, academic, State and National libraries.

Recognised as Australia's leading library system, URICA was developed by AWA in Australia and is now gaining significant acceptance overseas.

Contact for further information:

Caroline Power  
(National Product Manager) \_\_\_\_\_ **(01) 922 3300**  
Kryn Versteeg (NSW) \_\_\_\_\_ **(01) 922 3300**  
David Gregory (Vic/Tas) \_\_\_\_\_ **(03) 529 4133**  
Phil Lloyd (SA) \_\_\_\_\_ **(08) 79 9581**  
Barry Sullivan (Qld) \_\_\_\_\_ **(07) 369 3577**  
Chris Hickman (WA) \_\_\_\_\_ **(09) 321 9334**  
Richard Eason (ACT) \_\_\_\_\_ **(062) 47 7522**  
Lim Huat Seng (Singapore) \_\_\_\_\_ **28 9991**  
Tony Kapetanovich (NZ) \_\_\_\_\_ **76 0129**



**AWA COMPUTERS**