

## DIRECT PURCHASING BY LIBRARIES FROM PUBLISHERS

In 1983 the Joint Standing Committee for the Book Trade expressed concern to the Association at the effect on the Australian book trade of direct supply by publishers to libraries.

General Council requested further details from the Joint Standing Committee and has been provided with further information by Pam Trier, one of the LAA representatives on the Committee. Council considered this information at its August meeting and felt that it was of sufficient interest to be published in *InCite*.

It should be noted, however, that this is not a policy statement.

The relationships between the author of a book, the publisher or his agent, the book shop or library supplier and the book purchaser are complex and delicate. Each of these groups is significant and has an important part to play in the processes of book production and distribution. The close association which has developed between booksellers and librarians is based on their commitment to the same ideal, namely the encouragement of literacy through the use of books.

Librarians on occasions purchase books directly from authors, or from publishers, but the majority of library purchases are from book shops or library suppliers. In the paragraphs which follow the term 'supplier' refers to bookshops and to specialist library suppliers.

The supplier provides a wide range of services to libraries to assist with the speedy and accurate supply of books. In addition to supplying material, often at a price reflecting a discount on the recommended retail price, the supplier should handle standing orders; claim material not supplied; hold orders for titles not yet published; report before supply on orders which are not clear, or where the bibliographic information changes between pre-publication announcements and the publication of the book; handle prepayments for publishers when required; and in many cases provide information on new publications.

The services cost money. It is a "swings and roundabouts" game. The supplier generally obtains normal commercial publications at a discount, and realizes a profit which to a certain extent offsets the costs of acquiring

specialist publications, those of university departments, non-government organizations, government authorities and learned societies, but the supplier may still have to impose handling charges to balance costs.

Librarians are of course quite at liberty to buy their books from whomsoever they choose. It may in the short term be cheaper for a library to buy material directly from the publisher who is offering as good or better discount to the customer who purchases direct than to the supplier. In the long term however this method of purchasing threatens the economic viability of the supplier, forcing him to put up his prices for all material supplied, and if he is left with only the difficult material to handle, costs will go up even further, and services will be reduced.

Partly as a result of the services offered by suppliers, libraries have been able to reduce, or at any rate not increase, the number of acquisition staff. Librarians must bear in mind that it is to their advantage to have a strong and viable book trade in Australia, and that this includes not only publishers, but also suppliers. If librarians by-pass suppliers for a significant amount of their purchases they may find that in the end libraries are disadvantaged if the supplier is forced out of business.

Pam Trier

LAA Representative

Joint Standing Committee for the Book Trade

### Ten of the Best

The National Book Council recently announced their selection of the Ten Best Australian Books of the Decade. Any such selection is always going to be open to argument and it is hard to know what criteria were used to select the 'best', but aside from all that it is very pleasing to know that nine of the ten are available in Braille and/or Talking Books through the Royal Blind Society.

For those who missed the list, the books the NBC rated as tops are:

*Triumph of the Nomads* Geoffrey Blainey

*History of Australia* Manning Clark

*Sometimes Gladness* Bruce Dawe

*A Fortunate Life* A.B. Facey

*Flying Home* Morris Lurie

*An Imaginary Life* David Malouf

*A Million Wild Acres* Eric Rolls

*John Monash* Geoffrey Serle

*Flaws in the Glass* Patrick White

*Twyborn Affair* Patrick White

### Medical Librarians Conference

The 6th Biennial Australian Medical Librarians Conference will be held from 25-29 August 1985 at the Regent Hotel, Melbourne.

Topics to be covered in the 6th Biennial Australian Medical Librarians Conference include:

- Management in the health libraries of the 90s.
- Peer review and continuing education.
- History of health science libraries in Australia.
- Library systems under change.
- Medical library design and planning.
- Electronic age for booksellers and publishers.
- MEDLARS 3 — the friendly system.

Delegates are invited to submit proposals for conference papers. Submissions should include a title, an estimate of desired reading time and a 200-word summary to the Conference Committee by 28 February 1985.

For further information contact: Jo Marshall, Conference Convenor, Walter & Eliza Hall Institute, Parkville, 3052.

### FOI:1984

The eleventh title in the ALPC's Report to the Nation series has just been released.

It is *Information and Freedom in 1984, A Report to the Nation* by Senator Gareth Evans and it includes an examination of the evolutionary FOI Act, the need to raise public awareness of the Act, and the role libraries can play in Freedom of Information.

Copies are available at \$3.50 each from Australian Library Promotion Council, 328 Swanston Street, Melbourne, Vic. 3000. (03) 63 5994.

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