

FRONTLINE

Anne M. Hazell



The hero of a recent Australian adolescent novel describes the teacher-librarian in his school in the following way: 'Dr Spinner divides people in two classes: users and non-users. Users are people who come into libraries and touch books, non-users are those who stay outside . . . Dr Spinner's ambition is to turn the users into non-users — simple harmless people who leave books alone.'

No librarian who is providing a service to the public would be happy to see her/himself as Al Capsella sees Dr Spinner. Yet many, not all but many, librarians seem to be much happier talking about such mysteries of the profession as ABN and NBD than they are addressing the difficult issues of user pays and social justice relating to libraries and information services. John Levett noted something similar in an editorial in the February issue of the *Australian Library Journal* and I was reminded of it again in a recent function attended by many South Australian librarians.

Although probably only 1 to 2 percent of South Australian members of the LAA will attend the October Australian Libraries Summit, pre-Summit planning has involved many of us during the first half of this year. After reading the Summit papers, the local Steering Committee (which included representatives of most Sections of the LAA)

decided that two main themes underpinned much discussion: national co-operation and social justice. These, then, formed the basis of the half-day seminar organised to involve other members of the profession and users in the pre-Summit discussions.

In some papers, even a broad division such as we had identified proved to be unsatisfactory, with topics like access to ABN appearing both as an issue of national co-operation and social justice. Yet overall, as an admittedly biased participant in that I presented the paper on social justice, I felt that at least some of the audience preferred contemplating the inward issues relating to national co-operation to discussing the outward issues relating to our users and the service we provide.

My knowledge of librarians outside my home state suggests to me that this tendency to look inwards to our profession, rather than outwards to the rest of the world, is not limited to South Australia. After all, there are some who believe that cataloguing is the innermost mystery of librarianship.

The Summit offers a unique opportunity for us to make ourselves visible to the community. Two months before the Summit, many of us will go to Sydney for what seems likely to be the biggest gathering of librarians yet to take place in Australia. Surely that is the occasion for us to discuss the tools of our trade, the inner mysteries of our profession?

In Canberra in October, we should be examining such issues as the role libraries and information services can play in improving Australia's balance of trade and how we can more effectively contribute to social equity. We should be examining the implications for library education of increasing the involvement of librarians in matters like these and

planning the advocacy campaign which will be necessary for us to achieve such high-minded objectives. What's more, we should be ensuring that the community knows that these issues are the focus of our discussions.

I appreciate the opportunity given to me by Alan Bundy to extend my audience beyond the boundaries of South Australia and look forward to meeting you at the IFLA/LAA Conference and at the Summit. I'll be the one with the soapbox.

Anne M. Hazell
President
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IFLA Delegates Note! The *Pattern of Library Services in Australia* is now available. Written by Past National Librarian, Harrison Bryan, it is a handy overview of the Australian library scene . . . a must to read before coming down under! Available to members of the LAA and NZLA for AUS\$14 and to others for AUS\$20. For delivery in 14-21 days please include \$3 for SAL postage.

Preparation of the LAA's *Guide to Australian Reference Sources: Social Sciences* is nearing completion. The compiler, Barbara Brady, would like to hear from anyone whose reference works are in preparation for publication in 1988 or have been published, revised or updated this year. Please contact Barbara Brady c/-LAA, 376 Jones Street, Ultimo, NSW 2007.

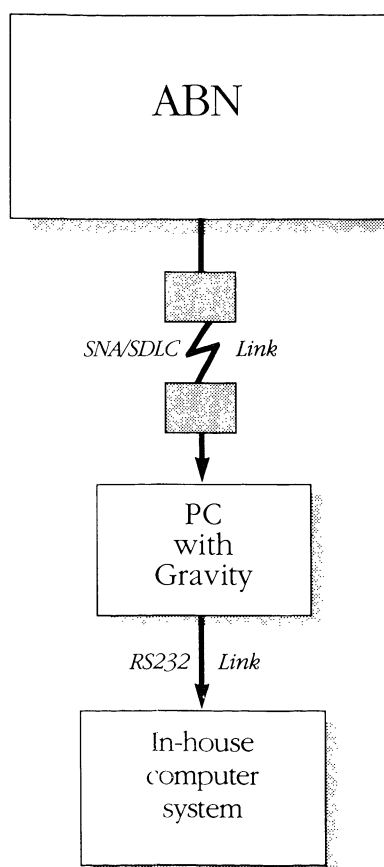
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