

Which direction?

In the year of the bicentenary and of my professional association's name change, I want to share some thoughts on the direction of librarianship.

As a past lecturer and present part-time tutor at the Kuring-gai CAE, I have given much thought to librarianship as a sub-group in the information field. Much of my thinking developed around a report published by Susan Edwards and myself on the implementation of setting standards for public libraries.

I left the academic world to become a public librarian at Marrickville Municipal Library. I made the move because I think the gap between theory and practice, especially in a

public library environment, is too wide. I also think the change from library theory to information theory assumes premises which are quite disturbing. Information theory is largely computer-oriented and does not place too much stress on the human element.

I noticed this trend in academic writings on the topic of information science and as a human oriented librarian I feel we need to be conscious of the implications particularly to the public library. The new information theory and the market approach to information may be suitable for the business and publishing world, but not so much at the library level. In my 13 years' experience in the library field, I find the trend of information theory, particularly in relation to freedom of information, disturbing.

Melanie Lazarow

Public libraries in focus

Diana Oliver's welcome response to my 'Frontline' on fines and opening hours of public libraries includes valid comment but has not focused on the points I was endeavouring, clearly without success, to make.

Thirty-nine percent of public library systems in Australia apparently find it necessary to fine. The rest, including some large lib-

raries, do not. The fact that there is such a divergence of practice and assumption in this important aspect of the image of public libraries requires more thought, investigation and research than has been the case to date. Nor is it just a matter of image. As Helen Modra pointed out as long ago as the LAA 1973 Conference in talking about barriers to public library usage — perhaps the hesitant user has heard that money is involved and perhaps knows that he may have to pay for keeping books late.

From a survey I undertook last year, in 31 of 43 services in Australia providing weekend opening, the initiative had come from the library. Full marks to them because there are significant, but not insuperable, logistical difficulties in providing weekend opening in public libraries. However, I am not convinced that enough public librarians have considered this vital issue or have systematically endeavoured to do something about it. How many public library seminars/workshops have been held in Australia to review experiences, options and strategies to achieve weekend opening?

Diana asks if it is fair to focus on public libraries. Yes, it is because public libraries are the 'window' of our profession. However, I am at one with Diana in her oft expressed concern that some tertiary libraries are insensitive to the problems they create for public libraries by, for example, not providing adequate weekend hours themselves and not allowing undergraduate students the use of their interlibrary loan (ILL) service. If I can join hands with Diana in stirring the pot, why do some tertiary libraries allow undergraduates to use ILL without, apparently, overloading their services but others appear unwilling to even attempt to do so? Inevitably that requirement shifts to public libraries which cannot, and would not want to, discriminate between users.

Again there appears to have been little open and sustained discussion on such an issue which affects the image of both tertiary and public libraries and creates a particular dilemma for the latter.

Alan Bundy
LAA President

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We all need friends

In response to Richard C. Yeates' letter 'Who needs Friends' (*InCite* no 10) it is curious that at a time when the literature provides examples of the many successes achieved by Friends Groups that Mr Yeates should deal such a hefty blow. As for his condescending statements concerning 'well-intentioned', 'possibly very nice people who know nothing about libraries' — most of the people who have an interest in Friends Groups do know something about their libraries and have sufficient interest in their libraries to donate some of their valuable time to promoting them.

The question 'Why do we librarians need anyone to carry the load of library advocacy for us?' has an obvious answer: the better and more widely spread the advocacy, the more chance there is of success. This is supported by studies which show that libraries with Friends Groups tend to have higher municipal per capita funding. This advocacy extends beyond physical resources to staff resources as a way to provide good service, contrary to Mr Yeates' concept of 'volunteer labour'.

Mr Yeates continues 'Are we so weak a profession that we need well-intentioned amateurs with time on their hands to push our case for us in high places?' The answer on evidence is 'yes'. A well-directed Friends Group

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can and does influence decisions at the level of governance, but this is not the only forum in which Friends Groups can operate. For example, they can also: encourage community appreciation of the library service; conduct lectures, hold social gatherings and classes for the community; raise funds for special purchases; promote local activities, eg art exhibitions. The role can be social, financial, educational or cultural. The library provides the focus from which these activities can emanate.

I hope that none of us is in a position to reject the idea of support from any of our most important Friends — our user Group.

Helen Hayes

Friends of the Library Sub-committee
Library Promotions Council of Victoria

Friends of libraries

Your correspondent Richard Yeates misses the point if he equates 'Friends of Libraries' with volunteer labour. As one who has long been involved in several fields of voluntary service, I can reassure him that such labour is all but non-existent at this stage, mainly due to the advanced age of experienced voluntary workers and economic factors which force people with 'time on their hands' to devote it to paid employment.

The 'well-intentioned amateurs' who establish Friends Groups do so with the intention of keeping public libraries alive and available to the public. As one of these amateurs and one to whom libraries have been important for the past 55 years, I would assure him that he is in no danger of losing his professional control of the mounting pile of books.

In my experience, the purpose of a Friends Group is to promote appreciation of library services within the community; to arrange cultural activities within the ambit of the library environs and facilities (with the cooperation of the library director); and to support and represent those sections of the community which from time to time find their needs threatened by the actions and machinations of local councillors.

It may surprise Mr Yeates to learn that Friends of Libraries may be very close knit, self-directing, 'possibly very nice', but quite capable of being not very nice under certain circumstances.

They do know a great deal about libraries, being first of all ratepayers and library users; amateur, yes, but informed, aware and determined that the educational, informational and cultural facilities continue to be available to every child, every family, every section of the community.

Available, enjoyed and appreciated.

Mary T. Kelleher

Librarians capable administrators

If I understand the President correctly (*InCite* no 9) he considers that it would probably be a good thing if libraries were run by professional administrators rather than by librarians and he proposes to bring this matter to the Executive and General Council, presumably to have them endorse a policy statement to this effect.

I find that both extraordinary and absurd. It would be untenable for the LAA to endorse a policy that libraries are too important to be

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left in the charge of librarians, who should be kept back from management and allowed to go no further than cataloguing or reference work.

If some governments consider that librarians are only fit for subordinate positions or for managing second-rate organisations, the LAA and particularly its President should be working hard to correct this misapprehension. The successful management institutes conducted by the Australian Information Management Association (AIMA) in recent years provide convincing proof that there is a growing body of librarians who are well prepared for the challenges of managing libraries and from those ranks we may with confidence select the next generation of librarian-administrators.

Neil A. Radford
President, AIMA

Technology park SA style

I have just returned from my study tour through America and England to review the provision of information services to science parks. This tour was made possible through an award from the LAA.

I read with interest Mr Allen's letter (*InCite* no 9, p. 8) regarding technology parks WA style and can assure him that I am not 'unaware' of Bryan Kelman's work. I discussed my proposal with Bryan before submitting it, and in fact cited his work in it. Mr Allen is clearly unaware that the introductory remarks to my proposal were edited for *InCite*, presumably to save space, so that a qualified comparative statement regarding availability of literature became an absolute. I was overseas by the time the announcement of my award was made but a phone call to Colin Taylor at the SA Institute of Technology or to the LAA or even Bryan Kelman would have clarified the matter, thus avoiding an unwarranted assumption of ignorance.

My study tour proved most interesting and informative. It will be most successful in planning a service to Technology Park and other business and industry in South Australia or in similar situations elsewhere. I am in the process of preparing a report and will submit an abridged version to *InCite* when it is completed.

Linda Luther
SA Institute of Technology

LINOS Project

The fifth meeting of the Steering Committee for the Learning and Information Needs of Schools (LINOS) Project was held in Canberra on 16 May 1988. At this meeting the consultants presented their draft report for comment.

The next draft of the report will be prepared and distributed by mid July 1988. It will be circulated for comment to members of the Committee and to unrepresented states. Relevant portions will be circulated to other interested parties who have assisted the research team. It is expected that the final document will be ready for printing by 5 September 1988.

Louise Lansley

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