



the front line

The First Summit — how valued?

The First Australian Libraries Summit has come, and gone. A good investment? The Australian taxpayer directly or indirectly contributed most of the funds, supplemented by a handsome donation from Ken Myer. Those three days of focused debate and resolution in Canberra's Lakeside Hotel cost upwards of \$250,000 of organisational time, participants' time, travel and accommodation. Do the outcomes, actual and potential, justify that cost?

The answer must be yes. Certainly some would, and have, voiced concern at aspects of the Summit. That for example, despite best efforts, it was not fully representative of library and information services; that users had no place in it; that the most contentious issue, user pays, should not have been dealt with in such a public forum.

Those possible caveats aside, the outcomes of the Summit are significant. For the first time in one place, representatives of school, public, special, academic libraries, library educators, library organisations and the database industry enlightened themselves about each other, and their perspective of their place in the national network of library and information services. It would be idle to pretend that as a consequence of the Summit

all of the gaps in empathy and understanding between school, public, academic and special libraries have been bridged; or that all professional elitism and insensitivity has been sublimated — but the personal contacts and small group sessions during the Summit unquestionably helped.

The Summit affirmed that library and information services are a national issue by recognition of the concepts of the national collection and the national database. For the first time, in my experience, the notion of an Australian library industry was freely described. There was implicit support for a stronger national stance by the National Library of Australia (NLA), and there was a welcome indication that the NLA may assume 'library of first resort' status in some areas of document delivery. The national network of public libraries, available now to 98 percent of Australians was identified as the primary access point for most Australians to the whole network of 13,000 library and information services — an identification the longer term import of which cannot be overstressed. And finally there was national recognition that fundamental to the effective use and development of positive attitudes to information and all libraries is the school library and the teacher-librarian.

The outcomes of the Summit involve substantially ACLIS and the LAA and a meeting is to be held soon of the Executives of both to ensure maximum co-operation. The LAA's Board of Education which met immediately after the Summit has already started examining the educational outcomes. General Council at its meeting of 25-26 November reviews the outcomes of the Summit and will decide what action is now required of the Association. Of outcomes

specific to the LAA, the one which will doubtless stimulate most debate is that permitting charges for 'add on' services in public libraries, which is in direct conflict with Section 3 of the LAA's *Statement of Free Library Services to All*, which reads:

In accordance with its information policy, the Library Association of Australia resolutely opposes any direct charge or fee for information service to users of publicly funded library and information services, whatever the nature or form of the information service and whether or not it entails access to machine readable databases or other forms of technology.

Whilst to repose on the bed of 'charges for add on services' will be uncomfortable to many of us, I believe we must now do so without recrimination. We must quickly revise our policy statement and identify just what an 'add on service is'. And taking a positive view we should use the springs of that bed to propel our public libraries into a more dynamic information role which they must assume if they are to become effective providers of, and gateways to, Information for the Nation.

The Summit coincides with a new direction for the LAA arising from the Corporate Plan and Review, the emergence of ACLIS and the development of the Information for the Nation campaign (which was endorsed by the Summit in its final plenary session). All three are indicative of an overwhelming desire that the role, importance and potential of libraries for a better Australia is better recognised. All three are indicative of a developing sense of library nationalism, to which the Summit made its special contribution.

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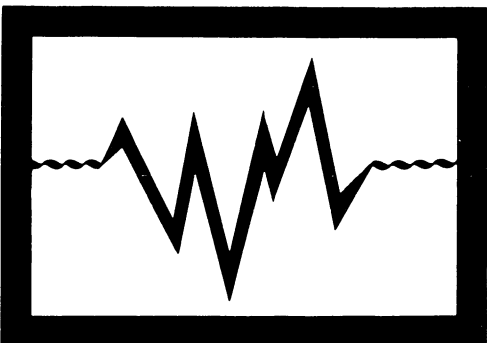
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IN THE NEWS

Censorship clearinghouse

The Australian Readers Association (ARA) has set up a 'clearing house' for the receipt and collation of reports by authors, librarians, teachers and publishers of materials that have been censored or have been subject to censorship.

The clearing house is based at the Language and Literacy Centre at Phillip Institute of Technology, Melbourne. The staff of the clearing house will produce, annually, a report on the instances of materials and books that are censored within the Australian school system.

Librarians are invited to send in reports of censorship attempts to the clearing house c/- Ms Anne Hanzl, Language and Literacy Centre, Phillip Institute of Technology, PO Box 179, Coburg, Vic. 3058. Confidentiality is guaranteed to individuals and institutions submitting information to the ARA.

A boost for libraries

The addition of Micmarc to the META-BCI library computer software package promises to boost support and extend the systems capabilities.

The Australian designed package now known as META-marc, is a library management system that automates cataloguing, accessions, circulation, public access searching, serials control, acquisition, accounts and management reports. It also includes a comprehensive thesaurus.

The product is very much used by school and special libraries in the corporate, governmental and technical spheres. Moreover, META-marc plans to tailor it further for use by public libraries and tertiary institutions. For further details contact: META-BCI Limited on (02) 959 5122.

At your local library

The LAA has had many requests about the 'At your local library' brochure recently produced by the LAA's North Queensland Regional Group and featured on the front page of our last issue. LAA members will be interested to know that they are available from the Group for \$10 per 50 leaflets. Send your cheque to the Secretary, LAA North Queensland Regional Group, James Cook University Library, Townsville, Qld 4811.

The idea and the text for the leaflet came from Carol Kenchington and the graphics and the design were by C. Brunton. Unleash the karma sutra karate koalas on your users soon!

Awareness through films

The *Aboriginal Film and Video Guide*, is a catalogue which brings together information on some 200 films and was compiled by Christine Koziel, for the Awareness Through Films Group, Community Aid Abroad.

The 56-page catalogue is a valuable resource for people wishing to hire, borrow or purchase films and videos on Aboriginals. The scope of the films listed is wide-ranging: humanities, children's films, crafts, music, mining, Aboriginal women, among many others. A detailed subject index is included in the *Guide*. Copies are available from the Awareness Through Films Group, GPO Box 1323, Canberra, ACT 2601.

1988 Indexers Award

The Australian Society of Indexers Medal for 1988 was awarded to Elmar Zalums for his superb index to C.M.H. Clark's - *A History of Australia Volume VI* published by Melbourne University Press in 1987.

The medal was presented by Josephine McGovern, President of the Australian Society of Indexers (ASI) at a recent dinner. A certificate was also presented to the Melbourne University Press to mark this achievement.

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Warren Horton, the proponent, the instigator and commiter of substantial resources to the Summit finished it exhausted I suspect, and possibly not a little surprised at how it finally evolved from its declaration of intent at the LAA's Darwin Conference in 1986. Although, in my presidential address at the 1988 Sydney Annual General Meeting, I emphasised that his was not the fault if the Summit disappointed, here is the place to recognise his great contribution to the Summit's success. Here is also the place to recognise the work of the Steering Committee, State Groups and the Summit delegates themselves. The organiser, Anthony Ketley, assisted by Megan Curlewis, Helen Richards and other staff of the NLA made it work. And Margaret Trask as Chairman of the Summit was the controlling hand, in the most formidable feat of chairing most of the delegates are likely to experience in their lifetime. It warranted a standing ovation and it got one.

The First Summit has specified the major pieces and players. Fitting together the national jigsaw of library and information services is now a task to challenge the leadership, vision and territorial proclivities of the institutions and organisations charged with the Summit outcomes. Of that, more later.

Alan Bundy
LAA President

Industrial News

The National Review of Local Government Labour Markets has released its Research Paper no. 3 on *Equal Employment Opportunity Legislation and Local Government in Australia*. Copies have been circulated to the Public Libraries Section Groups of the LAA.

Additional copies may be obtained at a cost of \$4 each (including postage) from Louise Wilson at the National Review of Local Government Labour Markets on (03) 669 3918.

Louise Lansley

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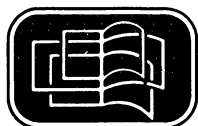
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