

FRONTLINE

The place of libraries



Apart from the usual wide gamut of Branch activities, the ACT Branch has focused on a number of specific issues. The first, the place of libraries in an increasingly difficult financial environment, reflects the general LAA concern with lobbying (exemplified in the Information for the Nation campaign). With librarians aware of, but in many cases not close to, the political decision makers, the ACT Branch has initiated steps in a number of directions to improve the performance of librarians in the political framework.

In October, the LAA Special Libraries Section organised a half-day seminar on the issues confronting government department libraries under the title 'Marketing Specials to their Powerbrokers' which resulted in the establishment of a small 'action group' on the issue. Throughout the year a 'watching brief' was maintained on issues arising from the Block Report on libraries in the Public Service.

In specific terms, the President met with the Secretary of the Department of Social Security in the context of planned reduction of services for the library in that department and established understandings for future action. It is quite clear that librarians in

departments are often far removed from the hierarchy of senior decision making. As Professor Richard Dougherty has written in an editorial in *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* for July 1988, the result is that the services library and information units can offer are often 'invisible' to top government officials.

The Branch also made representations, notably through *The Canberra Times* on the implications of the Canberra casino development which includes the Central Library, Canberra, and Senator Bob McMullan addressed the Branch on the politics of lobbying. This talk provided the basis for his subsequent keynote dinner speech to the Australian Libraries Summit in October. The Annual General Meeting and dinner of the Association will be held in the New Parliament House in December — a venue which we will, hopefully, see increasingly used by the LAA in its lobbying activities in conjunction with a new Canberra presence.

The Branch prepared a submission, as requested by General Council, on Canberra hosting the 1992 LAA Biennial Conference. While it was clear that Canberra had all the facilities *par excellence* including the new National Convention Centre, the vote for a regional conference at Albury-Wodonga prevailed — leading to both disappointment and relief on the part of members of the ACT Branch.

Several initiatives were taken, with the particular assistance of incoming national President, Averill Edwards and Shirley Campbell of SLACAD, to involve teacher-librarians more in LAA activities. A very successful seminar was held in the

National Library to bring to the attention of teacher-librarians the library resources of Canberra, as well as providing a forum for Sue Kosse to emphasise the benefits of LAA membership.

Money and human resources are required for such increased Branch activities. A fund-raising exercise through a projected revamped Branch newsletter was encouraging in that new advertisers allowed a useful financial base to be assembled by the end of 1988 for a recruitment drive in 1989. A significant number of 'new faces' appeared on the Branch Council in 1988 but, as elsewhere in Australia, a great number of LAA members are not active in Branch activities and an even larger number of potential members decline to join. Specific targeting of particular ACT institutions may be required in 1989.

Colin Steele
President, ACT Branch

63 InCite's later ...

After 63 issues it's now time to put down the pencil, unhook the mouse and put the lid on the rubber cement. Thanks go to InCite's past editor, Brenda Pittard, who gave InCite its flavour and established its advertising base, to Tanya Vojsk who has worked tirelessly over the last 18 months. Thanks also to Noel Manly, (who has been involved in more than 63 issues) and to Gordon Bain, David Jones and Jenny Adams. InCite has attracted great feedback during the last 3 years. I will look forward to reading it on my free weekends in 1989.

Kathy Husselbee, Editor

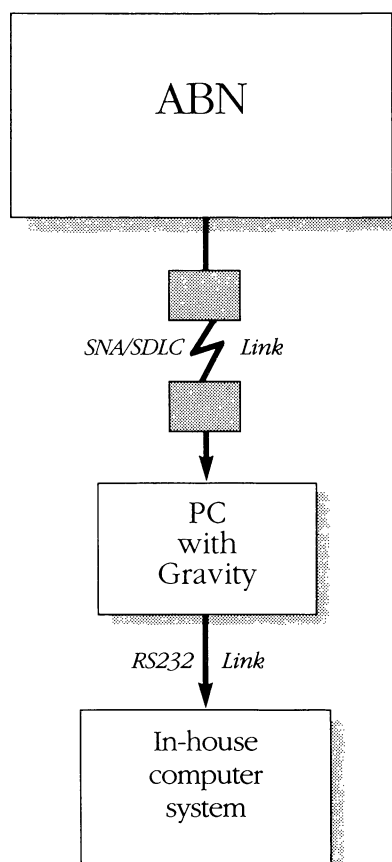
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