

The LAA Numbers Game

Is there something significant, some invisible barrier associated with the number 8,000? For those of us who are involved in the LAA numbers game this would seem to be the case.

Not since 1976 has the LAA membership risen above 8,000 — and that was at a time when we had a large number of Registration Examination students. So perhaps 1988 can be the year of the 8,000th member — and this surely is an achievable target.

Last year the Association's General Council set a series of performance goals for the period to 1990. These covered areas such as financial performance, monograph sales, serial subscriptions and membership. The Council believes that the Association can increase its membership by 10 percent in 1988, 8 percent in 1989 and 10 percent in 1990. The higher targets are for conference years, when we normally attract more recruits to the cause.

What proportion of our potential members belong to the LAA? 'Seat of the pants' guesses generally put the figure around 60 percent, but this year we will be more professional in our approach. Branches have been asked to estimate our potential membership in the various member categories — Associates, institutions, students, library technicians, non-professional members. This will require some legwork, and some research, but if we don't know what we can aim for it makes it all the more difficult to reach those targets.

1987 was not a high point in our membership history. We had an overall loss of 270 members. The only Branch to increase its numbers was the Northern Territory Branch,

with an increase of 11.7 percent. Losses in other states ranged from 1.2 percent to 9.3 percent. Pretty discouraging for all those hard-working recruitment committees. And the real problem is that while they do a good job, we fail to keep those members we have worked so hard to recruit. Last year 1,352 members of the Association were 'deemed resigned' because they had not paid fees for two years. A further 271 members resigned, about half because they were no longer employed in librarianship.

We need to find out why our members cease to support the Association, especially that very large number who simply fade from the records without telling us why. This year we will be taking steps to find the reasons.

There are some excellent initiatives being undertaken by Divisions to encourage new members to join — see for example Mary Baker's article in the first issue of *InCite* for the year on the steps being taken to attract young professionals. The challenge then is to keep them as members.

And the 1988 target? We had 7,393 members at 1 January, so a 10 percent increase will take us well over the elusive 8,000.

Sue Phillips

Membership Services Manager

Correction

Ms Diana Killen was incorrectly linked to the Victorian Ministry of Arts on page 9 in the last issue of *InCite*. In fact Ms Killen does not work for the Ministry but is a private consultant.

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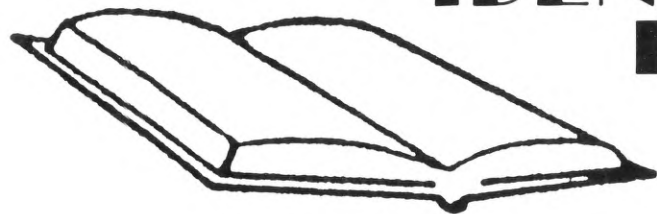
produced promptly and written with a specified purpose it can not only be a record of stewardship but a potent political statement. It can also assist in one of the things libraries are better at than most — communicating and sharing response to change and challenge (did you know that in Australian Library Annual Reports on Microfiche (ALARM) Australia is the only country with a full text microfilm record of library annual reports, dating back to 1872?).

Judith Bernstein, Head of the Business Library, University of New Mexico wrote 'Corporate annual reports comprise the most heavily used primary source material for information about company history, finances, employment, marketing, products and a view of the company's current and future plans'. The message is the same for libraries. Before me is the 1987 report of John Murphy, Librarian of the West Gippsland Regional Library Service and his staff. It is not an expensive glossy but it is a presentable report of challenge met, prefaced by a photograph of all of the library staff, with the byline 'Eager to serve!'. Also one must conclude, hard to ignore. Is there any library school in this country providing tuition in the purpose, value, compilation and marketing of library annual reports?

Every library in this country, small or large, whether the report is mandatory or not, should produce a timely and targeted annual report if it is serious about being taken seriously. Does yours? If not, why not? Does it fine adults? If so, why? Does it fine children? Even more so, why? Does it close its doors at times when users are most likely to want and to be able to use it? If so, why? Tell *InCite*.

Alan Bundy President

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