

LETTERS

Dear Editor,

I think the profession should be more interested in the psychology of reading than in the economics of information. I strongly believe that our fate is more closely connected to the human need for meditation than our need to engage in commerce, and in coming to terms with the former we will inevitably deal with the latter. I feel that, in concentrating our efforts on the question (or obscurantism) of information, we are drifting from the central point of libraries, readers and reading. This issue is fundamental to our survival as a profession.

David Mason
BA, ALAA

Information services (?) in public libraries

Dear Editor,

Alan Bundy (Front Line, *InCite*, 3 April 1989), in stressing the need for support for ALIA's IFTN campaign, stated 'Studies have found that public libraries, for example, provide less than 50 percent wholly correct answers and, more damning, nearly 20 percent that are wholly incorrect'. As no source of this information was given, I checked with him. The studies are from a recent USA

publication on online searching in public libraries.

I am thoroughly sick of statements by those who know very little about public libraries and the continued effort to build efficient information services. How can one generalise from an American study in this way? It is both irresponsible and damaging to make such unsubstantiated statements.

What is wanted is leadership and support and adequate assessments of services; of pressures on them, for example, from students with inadequate library resources, etc.

Of course there is a pressing need to improve information services in public libraries and utilise available technology. The campaign needs cooperation from all colleagues, not denigration.

Diana Oliver
Shire Librarian
Sutherland Shire Libraries and
Information Service

Oz representation at IFLA

Dear Editor,

Today I decided, employing institution permitting, to join the hordes of Oz librarians who would undoubtedly be off to Paris in August for IFLA. Shock, horror — a whole day of searching has discovered no group tours forming, with or without irresistible fare deals — there is a seeming lack of enthusiasm, whereas I'd thought that all that was holding people back was what ought to be restraining me — viz. lack of money. A rapid survey from Sydney to Perth has uncovered only four potential IFLA attendees — and not all of these are positive sightings.

Thankfully, the four include the nation's most senior librarian, Director-



ALIA 1989 Meetings

Executive Committee	Deadline
Friday 19 May (Sydney)	5 May
Thursday 20 July (Adelaide)	4 July
Friday 22 September (Sydney)	8 September
Thursday 23 November (Canberra)	9 November
General Council	
Friday/Saturday 21/22 July (Adelaide)	19 June
Friday/Saturday 24/25 November (Canberra)	23 October
Board of Education	
Thursday/Friday 22/23 June	7 June
Thursday/Friday 19/20 October	4 October
Publications Board	
Thursday 11 May	20 April
Wednesday 1 November	11 October

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING — Thursday, 20 July (Adelaide)

General of NLA, Warren Horton. But there is no sign of the Association's President and Executive Director — and the Association's representation at the highest level has to be important.

Isn't it a great waste of the Association's very large investment of money, time and talent in staging IFLA here last August not to follow up with a contingent capable of dealing and being dealt with in an IFLA voting year? How will other people get the feeling that we have a place in the world if we resile from going out to claim it? Do we really expect one provision of a conference venue to convince the Europeans that intelligent life resides anywhere else? Even the Americans, with many of whom most of us share the comforting limitation of monolingualism, don't know too much about us. Witness *American Libraries* (December 1988, page 922) reference to 'Harry Horton (director general of the National Library of Australia'.

So rise up and let's at least explore the possibility of getting a larger group to Paris for 20-26 August. I'll be happy to hear from anyone interested in trying to get a group together or, even better, maybe someone has already done so. My number is (02) 697 3440 at work and (02) 398 1004 at home. What have we to lose but our insularity and our credit ratings!

Carmel Maguire
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