

Letters

A National Library Week Legislative Day for Australia?

No one will argue that the Library and Information Services community in Australia, after a number of false starts down too many paths of good intent, has failed dismally to get its advocacy act together.

Not so the Special Libraries Association in the USA. Its latest press release notes:

'More than 600 librarians, friends of libraries, and trustees from across the US are expected to attend the 18th annual Library Legislative Day, 7 April 1992, in Washington, DC. The day is devoted to meetings with senators, representatives, and their staff members on Capital Hill. Issues to be discussed include congressional budget priorities, funding for the Library of Congress, Government Printing Office, and the National Research and Education Network (NREN), as well as national information policy/access issues.

Library Legislative Day begins with a briefing for all of the participants providing an overview of the current status of library legislation by congressional staff, followed by visits to congressional offices, a wrap-up

session for state library coordinators, and a congressional reception on Capital Hill.'

How much longer must it be before we recognise that increasing marginalisation is the inevitable consequence of our sporadic, ill funded, and wimpish approach to advocacy? How much longer before we have a truly national and well funded program to tell the people of Australia about the asset they possess, and should develop?

Alan Bundy

University of South Australia

American library degree program accreditation

Anne Hazell's open letter to all ALIA members (*inCite*, 17 February 1992, page 11) repeats a common error about American Library Association (ALA) recognition of library education programs. She cites '...the example of the ALA recognition procedures ... which focus on the recognition of schools, not individual courses.' This is simply incorrect.

Since the adoption of the *Standards for Accreditation* by ALA in 1951 no schools have been recognised as such. Under the

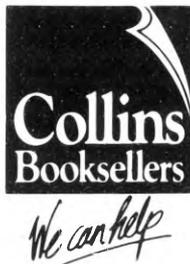
1951 *Standards*, the 1972 *Standards* and the 1992 *Standards* adopted by the ALA Council at the Midwinter Meeting in San Antonio in January of this year, only the first professional degree programs (courses in Australian terms) are accredited. This degree is commonly referred to as the MLS although its actual name varies among the schools themselves. Under the 1992 *Standards* it might also be possible for an institution to seek accredited status for more than one professional degree, eg., a masters in library and information studies, and a masters in archival studies.

However, the basic point remains—it is the programs that are accredited and not the schools. For example, I teach as an Adjunct Professor at Rutgers University School of Communication, Information and Library Studies. This school currently offers six degrees—a BA in Communications, a BA in Journalism and Mass Media, a BA in Speech, Language and Hearing, an MLS (Master of Library Science), a MCIS (Master of Communication and Information Science) and a PhD. Only the MLS program is accredited by ALA, not the school.

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▶ Anne's later comment that '... a recent survey of a group of American schools indicated that they felt they could quite well function without (accreditation)' probably needs to be treated with some care.

The word 'survey' sounds somewhat formal. Actually at a meeting of five deans/directors a straw vote was taken. The vote was not to get rid of the accreditation process but to say that if the costs and benefits of the process were not changed then the deans/directors would favour foregoing the process: see the letter by Jane Robbins in *Library Journal* for January 1992. ALA's Committee on Accreditation has now indicated its willingness to receive ideas addressed to the process.

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What future for Cinderella?

It would appear that the 1991 Inquiry of the Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training and its subsequent 'Cinderella Report', have taken many in the library profession by surprise. Many if not most were unaware that the inquiry was to be held or that the report had been published. The list of

submissions received reveals only two from the library profession, one from Warringa Shire Public Library, the other from ALLA, South Australia. There appears to have been no submission from TAFE, NSW (or QLD or TAS).

A number of recommendations, if adopted by Commonwealth and State governments, will have implications for provision of library services across the range of education sectors and also for public libraries. The report recommends 'reasonable access' for adult and community education groups 'to associated facilities such as libraries'. It also advocates 'a coordinated, mutually supportive approach to the provision of adult and community education by schools, TAFE and higher education sections'. One cannot dispute the strong arguments given in the report for a better deal for this sector from Commonwealth and State governments, nor for the need for library access for these adult learners. If recommendations for formal recognition of attainment in adult and community education courses are adopted the needs of these students for access to the services and resources in libraries will increase.

Up to now adult and community education students have been an 'invisible' group as far as libraries have been concerned. Their increased visibility as a formally recognised group of adult learners, will place greater demands on Public and TAFE

libraries, in particular, and, to a lesser extent perhaps University libraries.

If libraries are to give adequate service to these students, they will require appropriate levels of funding. In many TAFE libraries, resources are already over-stretched in spite of cooperative resource sharing and networking arrangements. A compounding factor has been the contracting of library resource budgets, while TAFE student numbers have increased. Many TAFE libraries cannot provide evening and weekend access, owing to lack of funds and lack of staff.

In today's climate, education and training are centre stage and there are real moves towards competency-based training. There is a need to build on the existing strong library infrastructure. Library systems should be funded so that the new vision is supported by a library and information infrastructure, not just a facilities infrastructure.

I'm not sure that the aim should be to turn Cinderella into a princess. It seems to be far more practical and appropriate to allow her to become a woman of the 21st century, able to play a strong role in the education field.

Madeleine Juchau
Manager

Library Policy
TAFE NSW Open Training
and Education Network □

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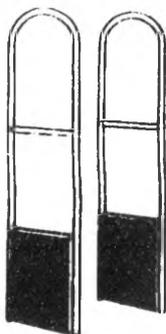
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