A topic which has dominated discussion in academic library circles in the United Kingdom in the latter part of 1976 has been the content of a University Grants Commission sponsored report "Capital Provision for University Libraries," known as the Atkinson Report after the chairman of the working party, Professor Richard Atkinson.

The Report is also of more than passing interest to Australian University Libraries because it seems to call into question some of the principles on which such libraries are based. The Report has already been the subject of discussion by the Committee of Australian University Librarians and the Universities Commission had "noted" the Atkinson Report. Mr. Harrison Bryan has published his comments for the benefit of academic librarians.*

The primary task of the Book unconsulted material to other stores. A concession call that there may worldwide would be created by moving out obsolete or would have on Australian library which was concerned with stock control and been the subject of discussion by the Committee of such libraries are based, The Report has already make to the Working Party which include:

Inet University Grants Commission sponsored report

As an example, there is University of 10,000 F.T.E. students which is planning to have the same student intake in 10 years time would have a total space for library provision of 1.5 sq.m/student or 5.000 sq.m. overall.

To which can be added provision for net growth in accessions of 0.2 sq.m per F.T.E. student.

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The recommended procedure for housing the literature on academic librarians whilst in practice 'the bigger the better' has always been the policy. It was inevitable that at some stage a halt would have to be called and in the absence of any concerted initiative from libraries it had to be economic circumstances which called form of revision of priorities. The new norms provide a basis for deciding which libraries have the best cases for capital expenditure on buildings.

In the course of the next ten years, five-sixths of U.K. libraries would have been demanding new buildings or extensions. With the introduction of the new norms, one fifth will still have cases for extra space, several more will have cases for a local store. However, many of the libraries in the smaller universities of the U.K. will find that their cases are being substantially trimmed.

Some of the new norms in the U.K. now have close to 3,000 students and are approaching a bookstock of 300,000 volumes. Their growth rate will be cut to under 10,000 volumes at a year unless they increase student numbers. Many long established universities still only take about 5,000 volumes per year. The newer universities, many of the libraries in the smaller universities of the U.K. will find that their cases are being substantially trimmed.

*Glen L. Librarian. South Australian Institute of Technology.
weighting in favour of allowing the smaller universities to build bookstocks larger than their student numbers would indicate. This could have been achieved by having the 'provision for future growth' on a sliding scale of say, 3,000 students 0.3 sq.m./F.T.E., 5,000 students 0.25 sq.m./F.T.E., 10,000 students 0.2 sq.m./F.T.E.

That point aside I consider the norms reasonable and the suggestion for the allowing down of ever increasing size in University Libraries to be sensible as well as an economic necessity.

Application of the Norms to Australian University Libraries

It is unlikely that the U.K. norms would be adopted by the Universities Commission without modification but it is interesting to calculate the effects of the norms on Australian university libraries to see whether the Committee of Australian University Librarians needs to prepare itself to enter into battle.

The calculations in Table 2 are based on figures published in the A.A.R.L. Supplement "Library Statistics 1975" included in the September 1976 issue of Australian Academic and Research Libraries. To arrive at an approximate of full-time equivalent students, two part-time students are counted as being equal to one full-time student.

Book Storage

In comparing 1975 bookstock (volumes) with the maximum capacity in volumes allowed under the U.G.C. norms, it is apparent that most university libraries in Australia fall well within the allowance and would expect virtually unrestricted growth for a number of years. Most of the newer universities have had student numbers rapidly outstrip library growth. The libraries which would, failing a rapid rise in student numbers, be forced to look next to a

local storage facility rather than a new library building are Flinders University, 337,616 vols. (324,000 allowed) and University of Tasmania 325,819 vols. (306,000 allowed) which both suffer the penalty of low student numbers mentioned earlier; University of Adelaide which with 828,279 volumes in 1975 will by now have exceeded its allowance of 852,000 volumes; The Australian National University with 815,173 volumes (519,000 allowed), which may perhaps be viewed as a special case being a 'prestige' university; Sydney University with 2,082,725 volumes as against the allowed 1,784,000.

Seating

It is clear from the figures that the U.G.C. norm of one seat for every six F.T.E. students cannot be applied in Australia. Only the University of New England has less than one to six and their figures 393 seats to 5,109 students (1 to 13) need to be viewed with large enrolment of external students in mind.

It appears, therefore, that Australian university libraries should look to a seating 'norm' of at least one seat to every four students. Perhaps someone else would like to explain why the Australian student needs more seating space in his university library than his British counterpart, because no really obvious reason springs to my mind.

Conclusion

In general, there doesn't seem to be a case for an alarming reaction to the Atkinson Report amongst Australian Universities, because the report most certainly does not advocate the no growth 'self-renewing' library so freely described by the press. It is perhaps also something of a note of good-faith to find that the U.G.C., out of the tiny sum of £4 million, allocated to new university buildings in the U.K. for 1977, has allocated £2.2 million to a major new library project at Loughborough University.