AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS FOR THE 1980s

There is a law affecting the growth of libraries not unlike that of geometric progression. By the process of acquisition, a library which has attained a certain size is called upon to grow much faster than it was smaller. Each year's additions result in a good many books which are but beginnings of series to be indefinitely continued, or the enlargement of the scope of the library by the purchase of books in some department hitherto neglected makes it necessary to cover the increased ground every year thereafter. Not long ago the trustees of the Astor Library (now the NYPL) complained that they could hardly use any of their large acquisitions in the purchase of really new books, on account of the demands for continuation of series already commenced. As our numerous libraries grow, this tendency to demand largely increasing funds to acquire larger and still larger buildings gives serious occasion to pause and think the matter over to see what can be done by way of relief.

This is not, as might have been magnified, a contemporary cri de coeur from an Australian university librarian or a beleaguered administrator, but an extract from a book written in 1894. In this the author is troubled by the rising cost of series and the problems of library storage. His suggested solution was increasing co-operation between libraries.

Role of National Library of Australia (NLA)

In this library co-operation the role of the NLA is crucial although it too suffered significant budget reductions in 1980/81. While the National Library of Canada's total operating budget for 1981/2 has been increased by 24.5% over 1980/1, with its acquisitions funds rising by 30%, the NLA's Information Bulletin of 13 November, 1981, provides the following sorry reading:

**The financial situation of the National Library is of great concern to all libraries in Australia.** Most libraries are directly or indirectly supported by public funds and the present financial climate is compelling all libraries to seek economies through even greater rationalization and interdependence, both of which have a long and successful history in Australia. The National Library is the keystone of these co-operative activities. Instability of the National Library to play the role which only it can undertake will prevent other libraries from using their share of public funds in the most efficient manner. Such a situation would be most unfortunate in a world in which access to information is fundamental to the health of the national economy.

There is no evidence to date that the Government has headed these words. With further public service cuts rumoured in Canberra, it is thus vital for all concerned to lobby to ensure that these cuts do not eventuate.

Having said this, there is still perhaps a need for the NLA to continue to debate what its collection building role should be, e.g. in relation to actual users in Canberra, to providing an improved national loan service, etc. In this context, the recently retired Librarian of La Trobe University, Dietrich Borchardt, has written a most stimulating article which deserves widespread discussion in the library and academic community and in the NLA.2 The fact that the NLA published this article in its own Acquisitions Newsletter indicates that it is more open to debate now than sometimes occurred in the 1970s. Borchardt surmises, if the NLA's collection continues to be developed as one that is appropriate to a research library, undoubtedly one must ask 'Research into what? And what kind of research? And research by whom?'

Place of University Libraries in National Bibliographic Provision

These are quite pertinent questions since one book in every eight in all the libraries of Australia is held in the NLA of the University of Sydney. This startling fact was revealed by the Director-General of the NLA, Harrison Bryan, in his delivery of the 1981 annual lecture to the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia. Quite rightly, he points out that such an uneven distribution is not good. He notes that in this national distribution one-third of the nation's resources are held in libraries of the universities and colleges of advanced education. Thus university libraries from being relatively minor operations pathetically dependent, all too frequently, on their local state library, have emerged as the nation's major bibliographic resource. One consequence of this is a conflict between the primary responsibility of a university library to serve its own clientele but as a result of its resources to provide a service elsewhere, e.g. through the inter-library loan network.

Quantity does not, of course, always relate to quality but it is a useful yardstick against which to make international comparisons. In this context Australian libraries, within a shorter growth period, are comparable to many British university libraries outside Oxford and London, but are less favourably placed when US research libraries are considered. Here only Sydney, with nearly 3 million volumes, approaches anywhere near the middle to top rankings issued by the American Association of Research Libraries. The 1979-80 US News Report on Research Libraries has indicated that while Australian undergraduate users are not given greatly dissatisfied by the library services at their institutions, this is not always the case for those involved in advanced study and research. "It is not without the fact that Australia is a very long way from the great library collections... in Europe and North America and Australian university libraries, with the strengths which they do have, are scattered over a vast continent: even the most flurgh campus in Britain is, by Australian standards, concentrated resources of the London area." The numerical growth documented in the statistics below must, therefore, be replaced with this context and taken as a signal for retreat.

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**Peter Crisp**, the Chairman of AACOBS (Australian Advisory Committee on Bibliographical Services) wrote to the Prime Minister on 2 September, 1981. His letter included the following paragraph:

"...I think it is important that the National Library of Australia should... make every effort to maintain a high standard of service to other libraries, particularly those in the States of Western Australia and the Northern Territory,..."
In New Zealand the recent University Grants Committee review of universities has indicated that library stock grew by 29% during 1975-79, but that this percentage increase required an increase in expenditure of 63.4%. This trend can be seen in analysis of individual university libraries. Thus at Queensland University new monograph purchases fell from 20,900 in 1974 to 12,117 in 1980, while University of Auckland acquisitions decreased from 15,729 in 1975 to 12,777 in 1980. This decline should be seen in the context that the explosion of published information is not diminished dramatically, while inter-disciplinary studies, often redefining areas of purchasing, have proliferated.

The CTEC has commented in its report for 1982-84 that 'the decline in library expenditure in 1975 and this out of a Deakin periodical allocation only of $29,600. This does not help, however, the librarians of Queensland and the universities who have to cut their services to their own clientele to alleviate the problem of inadequate library space.'

The various ways in which universities are increasing the efficiency of library operations—both internally and through resource sharing arrangements have already been noted (see paragraph 6.13). The Council is pleased to see the several initiatives being undertaken. It recognises, however, that the increasing costs which are unlikely to be alleviated in the short term. For example, there is a need for specialist staff to develop and operate computerised systems and, with restrictions imposed on staffing levels, this might result in fewer staff to provide the day to day library services.

While the recommendation in the Guidelines of this Report, as already noted, supported 'some increase in recurrent funding to assist in meeting changing needs for staff and in the maintenance of library services and buildings' (Vol. 1, Pt. 1, p. 235) the only specific comment in Volume 2 was that 'The Council has taken into account the special position in the-
tiary education sector of the libraries of the University of Adelaide, the University of Queensland and the University of Sydney and the University of Queensland is that the current recurrent grants recommended for the triennium (Vol. 2, Pt. 2, p. 92). It will be interesting at the time of writing to see how this equates with the grants that will ultimately be allocated to each of the three institutions.

Thus opening hours around Australian university libraries may continue to diminish, a trend which the CTEC table had documented for the 1976-79 period. This trend is not especially alarming because as universities have to reflect the priorities of an increasingly part-time student body and the costs of this provision within the total budgetary structure of a university library. Cuts in this area can be politically dramatic as events in Oxford proved in 1981 when protected severe reductions in the Bodleian's opening hours were announced.

Less staff may well be available on reference desks and less reader education could well occur in public service areas. This may be acceptable to the senior academic who knows "all about his or her field of research" and has an "invisible college" to rely upon but not so good for others. A less visible decline but perhaps more significant could be cuts in technical services operations so that acquiring and cataloguing books will take longer.

Cataloguing

Many libraries already have backlogs in their cataloguing. This is often caused by staffing restraints and more recently by an international cataloguing code change, Anglo American Cataloguing Rules 2 (and not as is often claimed by a perverse i.e. it is far too low. This may only reveals a global conspiracy on the part of Museum.

2.

1.

East Berlin:

Staatliche Museen zu Berlin: Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrus-Sammlung.

2 West Berlin: Staatliche Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz: Ägyptisches Museum.

There is thus a real danger by the CTEC and by others that any development on a relative shoestring are expected to be completed in a short time. Thus, discussions at the meetings of the Office of Library Co-operation of the NLA, both at Canberra and in 1981 included the University of Sydney, University of New South Wales, University of New South Wales, Newcastle University, University of Wollongong, State Library of New South Wales and the New South Wales Institute of Technology illustrated the pros and cons of co-operative activities within a circumscribed budget.

Economic constraints have also improved on the development of ABN, the Australian Bibliographic Network, which is being supported by the NLA as an automated national bibliographic service based on a co-operative on-line shared cataloguing facility. It aims primarily to develop a comprehensive national database of machine readable records for all types of library materials. This undoubtedly offers the best hope for a national network with decentralised nodes. It has, however, been developed by the NLA diverting internal resources to it and there will be integration problems and, therefore, probably initial falls in output, particularly for those libraries with existing automated data bases.

Acquisitions

Such complexities underpin technical services operations and yet are often not known by the average user. In a similar way, the length of time it takes to order, check and actually receive books can again be a major problem. Library ordering in monographic armlaw is where they are required urgent- e.g. for the short loan reserve system, but bulk-air- ed is still prohibitively expensive even with reduc- ed monographs intake.

Even where annual acquisitions decline, total holdings will continue to increase, placing pressures on library space and on librarians to improve the efficiency of their operations. Library activities such as inter-library loans, co-operative selection on a non-uniform and thorough the information is, the more helpful it is likely to be. Furthermore, the latest bibliographic data bases require a very high standard of authority control, or consistency, to eliminate wasteful duplication and to facilitate on-line searching.

Networks

Once resource sharing networks have been established (not just postulated or discussed in em- bryonic terms) reductions in cataloguing output have usually been minimal. It is more usual for cataloguing efforts to be concentrated in a central library, with the other libraries incorporating existing records into the central system.

The Universities Council of the CTEC has recognised this solution but this was not picked up in Volume of the 1982-84 Report, which also saw the removal of the Adelaide-Flinders joint library store from the list of building projects. It would seem that the CTEC has effectively shielded (if one can use that term here!) the library space problem until its research project in this area has been completed by the Monash University Graduate Library and the Southern Cross University. The conclusion of this project, Richard Staysner, has indicated, however, that the range of options is limited.

In view of the Commonwealth Government's fiscal policy, any consideration of building new libraries can be realistically considered by librarians, even if they were to abandon plans for low- density warehouse space which high density warehouse space likely to be funded in the near future. The funding of regional collaborative storage ventures was made less likely in 1982 by the defeat of the ABN and 1EC for the 1982-84 triennium. A national solution of a single store, even if it were slightly more likely to attract funding, would appear to be costly, unwieldy, and politically unacceptable to the Commonwealth Government.

The research into library storage currently being carried out at Monash is based on the assumption that decisions will be made na- tionally. We are thus interested in three alterna- tive low cost long term solutions.

(i) no new building at all
(ii) high density storage, purpose built for a...
If funds do not become available in the capital area then a demand to use recurrent funds for low cost extensions to existing buildings could prevail.

In the meantime, each university population will suffer inconvenience. A.A.U. is expected to have 2 1/4 million volumes in its A.D. Hope Store by 1985, while Queensland's store, which is not airconditioned, will contain over 200,000 titles within five years, which will amount to one-seventh of the library's total number of books. In addition, it discarded 20,000 books in 1980 but still has a few titles on its list. Most Australian university library collections have not accumulated enough useful. (even if this could be defined in an age when many overseas libraries collect ephemera) to wood easily. Nearly all the monographs at the A.D.U. have been individually selected.

In addition,\n
Weeding to discard or sell is much more difficult and is costly.\n
Weeding of unique copies to discard or sell is, in many classifications, a strongly demanding of professional staff and faculty time. Consequently it is an expensive procedure. It is practically impossible to gain faculty help and support for such a project unless there is an excellent professional staff and faculty time. Without this support it is doubtful that extensive unique titles will be possible.\n
Where there is no effective relationship between the library and the academic staff then this can be a politically explosive situation.

To return to individual universities in Australia, the librarian of the University of Newcastle has recently complained of a "steadily increasing workload caused by the shortage of space and the expediency of the academic collections to be built up. This process is in its mini-extension is forthcoming in the immediate future either reader seating or books and journals to the order of the stock will have to be oust ed on or off campus. The La Trobe University Library News reports that unless additional space is provided in the very near future, the effectiveness of the Library as an a reservoir for teaching and research will be seriously diminished, e.g. the absence of these volumes from open access would seriously hinder study and research, and the cost of such a change would be a severe strain on the Library's recurrent funds.\n
Comparison of Estimated Costs of Weeding, Stocking or Microforming 1,000,000 Bound Volumes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternative</th>
<th>Cost of Production</th>
<th>Implementation Cost</th>
<th>Cost Per Circulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conventional Library</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$1,000,000*</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeding</td>
<td>$1,400,000*</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-Density Storage</td>
<td>$450,000*</td>
<td>$2,954,000*</td>
<td>$0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microforming</td>
<td>$700,000*</td>
<td>$34,753,000*</td>
<td>$0.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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\* Construction cost: Cost includes production of microform and first purchase of readers and reader/printers.

Thus one reading of this shows there is no microform fix for library problems. The majority of material thus reduced will be lost to the microform collector. The University of Adelaide has embarked, as a result of the report of the Select Committee on the Future Development of the Barr Smith Library, on acquiring the microform version of the 25% of current periodicals at present available in this medium but this, it is understood, has faced considerable user resistance.

New Technologies

There also seems to be no immediate technological solution to the library storage problems on the library horizon. Many articles and books have appeared recently which indicate that society is now entering the information age. Authors, such as Arvin Toloff in his recent book The Third Wave, have argued that this constitutes a revolution similar to the agricultural and industrial revolutions of the last two centuries. The mechanism of this information revolution is embedded in improvements within international and domestic telecommunications, e.g. satellites, teletext and digital data systems, and by increasingly sophisticated storage and transmission devices such as video discs and the like.

Sadly for those who might see the revolution in information transfer technology as a solution to some library problems the new medium will not replace conventional messages, at least in the short term. The new technologies will only complement existing sources of information and make the task of the librarian/information provider and the user more complex.

One area which will increase in usage is on-line access to information data bases, notably those from overseas. The successful implementation of this search was published in June 1979 by O.T.C. of its MIDAS telecommunication link to the United States has dramatically reduced telecommunication costs. Such services as Lockheed Information Systems DIALOG is therefore not the first but will rather be stored and updated in electronic format.

An interesting development to watch is the new title AONIS. Six publishers, Academic Press, Blackwell Scientific, Elsevier, Pergamon, Spring er and John Wiley have agreed to investigate the possibility of electronic storage and subsequent delivery of publishers of scientific, medical and technical STM journals including illustrations. From these stored images, if it is retrieved and printed onto paper, it will be cheaper than office copy quality. AONIS is expected to become operational early in 1984.

University/College library mergers

Mergers between colleges and universities will have significant effect on library automation. There is definitely be long term advantages but in the short term the implications will be fairly severe unless additional funds are received to facilitate the change and at the time of writing there seems little likelihood of this. The Australian Conference of Principals of Colleges of Advanced Education are on record as stating that the CTEC funding provision is by no means adequate to meet the extra costs that merging institutions face.

The following table indicates the extent of additional costs involved in such mergers. Thus David Waters of the University of Tasmania writes.
Typically when governments change direction in education, the public libraries are often a primary consideration. From the foregoing it will be seen that the conclusion of tertiary education in Tasmania has had a significant impact on the University of Tasmania library. Countless meetings have been occupied in discussions and planning over the last 18 months. Such hidden costs are, of course, never catered for by the architects of such amalgamations. Nor, indeed, are the more obvious costs of identifying, reprocessing and transferring library collections, one can only hope that libraries involved in future amalgamations will be able to convince the powers-that-be of the magnitude of such an approach and its likely costs, but is more likely that they will not want to know.48

Alan Bundy, the Librarian of the Footscray Institute of Technology, has made an intensive study of U.K. amalgamations and has concluded the capacity of the library element in affected more by amalgamation than any other single aspect. As noted by the Library Association (1980), its profound in effect of effectively cutting in real terms the funding available for earmarked funds. While the Minister, Mr. Wilson, has noted this is a matter of concern, there is no significant indication that the students of Australian Union of Students have already recognised. Information and the exponential increase in either library extension and the adequate funding of libraries and their users. Considerable lobbying and considerable in the House of Representatives that 'the future of the library by the self-renewing library' principle put forward by the TEC (Footscray) Committee. Bundy notes this is a matter of concern, that the libraries involved in their 'alternative prospectuses' is whether there are enough books for them. On the surface the librarians do not figure at all, except perhaps as that popular caricature, the giver of books and helper of borrowers, or at best something of a missionary, neither the 'necessary evil' nor that 'necessary good', the academic... When funds are in short supply, competition is at its fiercest, and without the respect of our colleagues, without their confidence that we can use scarce resources efficiently for the good of the university, we shall not get them in sufficient quantities.49

Nor might one therefore add or be able to convince the political masters and senior public servants of the national decline in libraries exemplified in lack of purchasing power, restricted opening hours, increased remote storage and reduced resource sharing. The Director-General of the NLA has summed it up succinctly in his 1981 address to the Academy of the Social Sciences. To maintain and restore the health of Australia's major libraries and their users. Considerable lobbying and debate must take place on such issues as the need for library extensions and the adequate funding of network developments. In this the librarians themselves must play a major role. Nevertheless, the perspective communities which are often unaware of the complications impinging on library operations and which can be influenced by the interplay of personalities in debates on library matters. University libraries must take heed of the following (perhaps tongue-in-cheek words) of an eminent British university librarian:

Since the UGC consists largely of senior university teachers, these statements are regarded as the sort of academic colleagues for their libraries. Interestingly enough, further reassurance, if not enlightenment, came with the concern for express express-by academics and students over what they considered as a threat to their libraries in the 'soft renewing library' principle put forward by the Acknowledging Committee. But are we, the librarians, included in this regard over the long term? Do they love just the books and the periodic volumes? What the perspective professor wants to know about the library (and he may want to know before accepting his appointment) is how strong the collections are in his field, and what the students on their 'alternative prospectuses'. Whether there are enough books for them. On the surface the librarians do not figure at all, except perhaps as that popular caricature, the giver of books and helper of borrowers, or at best something of a missionary, neither the 'necessary evil' nor that 'necessary good', the academic... When funds are in short supply, competition is at its fiercest, and without the respect of our colleagues, without their confidence that we can use scarce resources efficiently for the good of the university, we shall not get them in sufficient quantities.49

Conclusion The immediate outlook is therefore not a bright one either collectively or individually for university libraries and their users. Considerable lobbying and debate must take place on such issues as the need for library extensions and the adequate funding of libraries and their users. Considerable lobbying and debate must take place on such issues as the need for library extensions and the adequate funding of libraries and their users.