TIP-OFF: News from the Executive Director

WHILST THE AMOUNT of work within the LAA office never seems to change even in the great Australian holiday period, there is certainly evidence that our divisions have a quieter period in January and February. This, in turn, affects the number of items for consideration by the Executive Committee of the LAA.

The Executive met for the second time in 1982 at the ANU on 12 March. After a short respite at the January meeting, we are (alas) back to agendas in excess of one hundred pages. One must therefore pay tribute to the good management of the President as we closed the meeting exactly at the chosen time after each of the forty plus items had been considered.

One item which took up considerable time was LAA office accommodation. At this stage there is little more to report than that contracts have been exchanged and settlement will take place subject to Council approval of our development application. Aspects which had to be discussed were the financing of the building, the sale of Elizabeth Street, the use of the ground floor and when we would move.

If all goes according to schedule, it is anticipated that we will be in our new premises by the end of July. The ground floor will be leased for use as warehousing, which means that we will not have to renovate. The Executive has been concerned at all times to finance the purchase of new premises within the 1982 budget.

The financial performance of the Association and the membership figures are always of particular concern. On a happy note, our financial membership increased by 98 in the period 24/12/81 to 1/3/82, so that at 1 March, we had 6668 financial members. These figures will probably change drastically at 1 April, as people who have not yet paid 1982 fees become unfinancial. To avoid this, a special plea — please pay up before the end of March.

Mainly due to many people delaying payment, it is very difficult to predict the likely performance of the LAA in 1982. A rather worrying trend is that fees have been paid at a slower rate than in 1981. Hopefully, the appearance of the Conference registration form for LAA22 and the fact that registration must be completed before the end of May will jog people into paying fees. The difference in cost between members and non-members is $50.

An item which received preliminary discussion was divisional accounting procedures. It has come to our notice rather abruptly that the cost of auditing divisional accounts is 10 percent of the divisional allocations (audit fees are paid by Head Office).

There appears to be considerable difficulty for some divisions in presenting fully completed accounts to the auditors. The General Treasurer and Executive Director hope to investigate the problem areas and present a paper for discussion at General Council.

A rather relieved Vice-President tabled a mock-up of one part of the Manpower Study. The draft final report will be presented to General Council in April. Following consideration by the Council the report will be published and available for sale. Further details will appear in *InCite*. This study consitutes a vital resource for the profession and hopefully it will be updated every three to five years. Our thanks and congratulations must be extended (in anticipation) to B. Mitcheson, V. Bourne and M. Hill.

On 22 February the President, General Secretary and Executive Director met with the Standing Committee of AACOBS to discuss a course of action towards a national information policy. It was agreed that a meeting be sought between the LAA, AACOBS and the Australian Computer Society to discuss mutual interest in the development of an information policy and related matters. The Vice-President and Executive Director will represent the LAA at this meeting. The LAA is also writing to all political parties to urge them to consider a national information policy.

It is hoped that sales tax will not appear again on the agenda for a long time, although the Executive believes that at election time the LAA must be ready to do any lobbying that may be required. Particular thanks must go to all members and divisions who contributed to the lobbying strength of the LAA.

An issue receiving consideration by the Executive is the LAA and information scientists. This will no doubt be a subject requiring much thought and, hopefully, action following thoughts. There has been concern for some time in some spheres that the LAA does not adequately recognise or meet the needs of information scientists. Whether or not this is true, it is obviously an area deserving proper consideration by the Association.

The Executive of the LAA resolved to set up an interim committee for the planning of the IFLA conference in 1988. While the LAA has not yet given a formal undertaking to host this conference, some preliminary planning must take place. The committee will consist of the President (ex officio), Executive Director (ex officio), nominee of the National Library, nominee of the State Library of New South Wales, representative of the NSW Branch, General Treasurer and Chairman of the International Relations Committee.

This report includes some of the more substantial items discussed by the Executive; many others were continuations from earlier meetings. The next meeting of the Executive will take place in conjunction with General Council on 15 April, in Sydney.

Susan Acutt
Executive Director

Learning about Microcomputers

TERMS SUCH AS RAM, ROM, K and bytes should no longer be a source of confusion for those librarians who attended a recent seminar organised by Kuring-gai CAE's Centre for Library Systems. 'Microcomputer Systems and the School Library', held on 5 December 1981, was a one-day course designed and presented by Dagmar Schmidmaier and John Kerrisk.

The seminar program was designed to encourage participants to examine commercially available microcomputer systems in terms of those characteristics which are most important in library applications.

In a very clear introductory lecture on microcomputer hardware and software John Kerrisk outlined basic microcomputer functions covering areas such as internal memory, disc storage layout, disc capacity and systems software. The differences between systems and operating software were identified and discussed.

In a question and answer session following, participants were alerted to the need to ask the 'right question' before selecting a program or having a program written. During a 'hands on' session, participants created and displayed a small bibliographic file on Apple II microcomputers.

The afternoon session consisted of a case study, presentation and summary. In the case study, participants explored issues relating to the creation and maintenance of files for circulation control. The case study served to highlight the importance of the system specifications prepared by librarians as the basis for computer applications.

Pre-reading for the course included the recent publication *Automating Circulation Control in the School Library* (KCAE Centre for Library Systems, August 1981). This publication is available from the Centre for Library Systems, Kuring-gai College of Advanced Education, Eton Road, Lindfield 2070, at a cost of $7.00.

As part of their registration fee, participants also received a clear and thoughtful series of handouts covering lecture content and issues raised during the day.

The Centre for Library Systems intends to hold similar courses during 1982. These can be recommended for those who wish to have a better understanding of the functions and capabilities of microcomputer systems, designing system specifications and what the right questions might be.

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