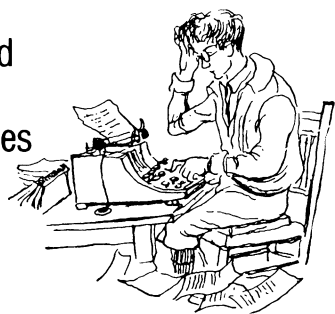# THE SOURCE

Edited
and compiled
by
David J. Jones

## Source for architects

Having perforce developed a professional relationship with architects over the past year or so — an experience which I have incidentally found stimulating and demanding — I wasn't game to pass up the opportunity of asking a tame architect to look at Valerie Bradfield's *Information sources in architecture* and to let us know how it measured up.

Geoff Larkin, from the Government Architect's Branch in NSW, is a project architect for the new State Library building, the hole for which yawns deeper day by day. He had this to say about Bradfield's work:

The aim of this work is to review 'the coverage of information over the whole of the construction process'. The author argues that in an age when the architect's liability for the design and performance of buildings is increasing, the architect cannot afford the luxury of doing without information that is not readily to hand. Point well made.

The organization of the book is clear and logical, proceeding from the general to the particular. Jargon is kept to the minimum by the librarians and architects who have contributed to this volume. Initialisms, acronyms and abbreviations are all explained in a comprehensive listing. Sections of the book deal with the specific information sources relevant to all phases of the design and construction process. Elsewhere the work deals with information retrieval, conservation, presentation, running a practice and working abroad.

The book has been written primarily for the British architect, and the sources identified are almost wholly British, American or European. I was disappointed that Australia and the RAIA are not even mentioned in the section on working abroad. The publisher's Australian head office is, ironically, a stone's throw away from Australia's premier building research organisation. Perhaps by symbiosis a second edition will have a section on Australian sources, for the Australian market. Sad to say, such a section would not be a very large one.

But the absence of Australian references does not too greatly reduce the book's applicability and usefulness to architects in Australia. They are used to obtaining the great bulk of research information from overseas sources, but will nonetheless feel considerable frustration that the 'obscure' sources can now be identified more easily than the local ones.

This book fills a gap by packaging the diverse sources relevant to the building process as well as providing some rather basic but practical guidance for the tiro information officer or architect on the subject of information handling. The contributors are generally print-oriented, as can be seen from the hardly enthusiastic treatment of computerized information retrieval. But reading that section was enough to promote the thought that a hardcover book may not be the ideal format for such a package.

*Information sources in architecture,* edited by Valerie J. Bradfield, was published in London last year by Butterworth. Its local price is $79.00 (ISBN 0 408 10763 4)

## The laughter and the tears

The history of Australian cinema is one of enthusiastic acceptance of an innovation, skilful development of a product with real local identity, decline and fall into virtual non-existence and, most recently, revival and real achievement once again.

The rich threads of this subject are taken up with great ability by Graham Shirley and Brian Adams in their *Australian cinema: the first eighty years,* which was published last year by Angus & Robertson and Currency Press. The authors guide the readers from the incunabula of the documentary film in Australia — footage such as 'Passengers alighting from the ferry Brighton at Manly' — through the early story films, such as 'Soldiers of the Cross', into the flowering of Australian cinematic production in the twenties and thirties.

Good use is made of sources, primary and secondary, in presenting the facts and interpreting them. The authors do not allow us to forget the important role played by political as well as commercial interests in the development or otherwise of Australian cinema. Nor do they neglect the artistic side of what is, after all, an art form of great potential. They chose to end the book at 1975, with the movie 'Sunday too far away' — a watershed in Australian cinema in many ways. Since 1975 there has been a period 'rich enough to demand a separate book'. I hope Messrs Shirley and Adams can be persuaded to write it, once the celluloid dust has settled. They managed pretty well with the first eighty years.

*Australian cinema,* by Graham Shirley and Brian Adams, was published last year by Angus & Robertson and Currency Press. It costs $24.95. (ISBN 0 207 14581 4)

## Culture with a small k

Popular culture is now a legitimate subject for scholarly attention, and a wealth of reference and bibliographical material is now available for some countries at least. Larry N. Landrum's *American popular culture,* for example, is a useful guide to resources on this topic. It follows the familiar format of the Gale Information Guides series: annotated entries arranged in broad subject areas, name and subject indexes. The 2173 entries cover a selection of references on everything from Popeye to pyramid power, Art Deco to Zorro. There are some gems: 'Meaning in Star Trek' (a Jungian analysis); actually a range of approaches to the subjects is represented here, from the heavy to the popular. The common features of Australian and American culture will make this work of more than passing interest for many Australian libraries.

Larry N. Landrum's *American popular culture: a guide to information sources* is volume 12 in the American Studies Information Guide Series, published by Gale Research. It appeared in 1982 and costs US$40.00. (ISBN 0 8103 1260 3.)