

The Source



David J Jones

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AFTER DIPPING into Rosalie Maggio's recent guide to non-discriminatory language, I guarantee you'll be more careful about or at least more conscious of the words you choose. As Maggio points out time and time again, many words in common usage have undertones or overtones of bias, sexism and discrimination (in the nasty sense of the word).

Non-sexist language is by now reasonably well-established—the Commonwealth Style manual, for example, devotes a chapter to the subject; most Australian publishers, including ALIA Press, advocate the use of non-sexist terminology; and there is a sizeable literature, to which the present work makes a valuable contribution. *The dictionary of bias-free usage*, published by Oryx Press in 1991, contains 5000 entries and suggests 15 000 alternatives which are bias-free, gender-free or gender-fair. Today's enlightened writer would be aware of some of the non-preferred terms: 'jockeyette' (for a female jockey, not for an undergarment), 'fireman', 'policeman', 'manpower' and so on. Others, I suspect, still slip through once in a while: when did you last call a 'manhole' a 'sewer cover, utility access hole, street hole, vent hole, exit port, underground service access hole, peephole or, my favourite, 'sewer viewer'? And I don't think I can be persuaded to give up *deus ex machina* on the rare occasions when I need one.

The compiler freely admits that the reader will not agree with everything in this book: 'there is imperfect consensus today on which words are biased and on what constitutes an adequate substitute for those that are.' I'll say there is. Read the compiler's introductory chapters before you use the dictionary: it puts the work into perspective, and gives very useful guidelines. The dictionary sequence itself is fascinating to browse and helpful, incidentally, for Australian authors thinking of writing for an American audience without raising hackles. *The dictionary of bias-free usage* by Rosalie Maggio was published by Oryx Press in 1991 and costs US\$25.00. My review copy was supplied by James Bennett Library Services. (ISBN 0 89774 653 8)

Scientific sleuthing

Jill Lambert and Peter A Lambert have now produced a second edition of their *How to find information in science and technology*. In the five years which elapsed since the 1986 edition, resources have expanded, media have diversified, and the Lamberts accordingly pay more attention to computerised materials, rewriting the chapter on searching to take account of things like CD-ROM. More attention is also given to software packages for personal files and indexes. Intended for the practising scientist or technologist, this is a succinct and readable introductory text. Jill Lambert and Peter A Lambert's *How to find information in science and technology*, second edition, was published by Bingley in 1991 and costs \$17.50. Review copy supplied by James Bennett Library Services. (ISBN 0 85157 469 6)

Closing with the past

The range of subjects tackled at the Forums on Australian Library History has certainly broadened since the first Forum at Monash in 1984. Then our emphasis was on the colonial period, but the time-frame has since extended to embrace even the near-present. The focus of many researchers has widened, and most now pay more than passing attention to the economic, social and political environments in which library and archives developments have unfolded.

So contributors to *Peopling a profession*, the papers from the fourth Forum in 1989, tackle archivists in the 1950s, as well as library suppliers in the 1850s, some New Zealand as well as some Australian pioneers, publishing and other aspects of the book trade. Leading them out of the starting gates is Boyd Rayward's keynote address, drawing on his inevitable love-hate relationship with the subject of his biographical study: Paul Otlet, founder of the International Federation for Documentation (IFD). Feeling smothered and dominated by one's subject, yet needing to persist and breathe life into it—many researchers will identify with Rayward's experience, as related in this valuable and

► informative paper.

Most papers in the program dealt loosely with the period 1900–1950 and with the contributions of individuals. One will naturally dip into the papers according to one's interest, and their substance varies considerably, from Keith Davison's preliminary work on the Ballarat Mechanics Institute to Jim Cleary's vivid and meticulous analysis of the careers of four very different pioneer women librarians at the Public Library of New South Wales.

Mary Ronnie provides a fascinating account of WB McEwan's life and times as public librarian in Dunedin, including the magic moment when the Town Clerk turned the key in the door, swung it open and said 'There is the Library. For God's sake tell us what to do with it!' Richard Overell takes us well and truly back to colonial times with his lengthy exposition of the relations between the Melbourne Public Library and one of its early English book suppliers.

Other papers throw new light on a wide range of issues and people in libraries, archives, publishing and book selling. And as the title promises, the roles of outstanding individuals do emerge. Andrew Fabinyi and John Metcalfe in Steven Kafkaris's paper on Australian literature (or the lack of it) in Australian libraries.

Richard Pennington and Cumbrae-Stewart in Peter Biskup's description of the faltering steps (not all of them forwards) in the preservation of official archives in Queensland between the wars. Sharman and Maclean in Frank Upward's paper on the divergent development of archivists in the 1950s. Alexander McCubbin and his precarious publishing in Cecily Close's paper. Stanley Skipper and Robert Bedford, and their alternative schemes for library development in South Australia, in Michael Talbot's contribution. These are valuable insights into some of the characters who have helped shape the library, information and archives profession.

As an interesting counterpoint to Rayward's methodological paper comes John Thompson's

'snapshot' of the National Library of Australia's documentation of the library profession. To use Rayward's recipe, one must have ingredients (in Otlet's case, an apparently gargantuan larder), but in many local cases, Thompson points out, there is a 'poor record of individuals in caring for their papers and ensuring their survival as the basis for future research'. It is comforting to know that the NLA has for some time had ex-librarians in its sights, with a fair measure of success.

Peopling a profession: papers from the fourth Forum on Australian Library History: Monash University, 25 and 26 September 1989, edited by Frank Upward and Jean P Whyte, was published by Ancora Press in 1991. Copies are available from the Graduate Department of Librarianship, Archives and Records, Monash University, at \$22.00 plus \$3.00 postage. (ISBN 0 86862 014 9 ISSN 1036-2037)

Key reads for kids

Two recent publications from Redfern Legal Centre Publishing (RLCP) focus on the law as it affects juveniles. Both are written in the plainest of plain English, are well-organised and thorough, and should be readily accessible to children, their parents, teachers and youth workers. The first is the second edition of *Girls and the law*, and looks at the problems which girls may encounter with the law in New South Wales, tackling issues such as child welfare law, violence in the family, dealing with the police, sexual offences, school, leaving home, social security and housing. Much of the book is in the form of questions and answers, and all of it is highly readable and non-technical. Contact numbers for further

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assistance and advice are provided. There's no index, but it's not hard to find your way around it. *Girls and the law: a practical guide* was prepared by Women's Legal Resource Centre and published by RLCP in 1990. It costs \$11.95.

(ISBN 0 947205 22 5).

Kids and the law, edited by Lynne Spender, covers both sexes and all states, and is aimed primarily at parents, teachers and youth workers. The same range of topics is covered, but they are dealt with in more depth and with case studies to illustrate some points. Contracts and debts, damage done by a child, part-time work and income tax, the rights of Aboriginal children, Austudy, tattooing, caning—these are just a few of the hundreds of issues discussed. There is a good index, and the whole is enlivened by erstwhile *inCite* helper Gordon Bain's illustrations. Lynne Spender's *Kids and the law* was published by RLCP in 1991 and costs \$17.95.

(ISBN 0 947205 16 0) □

(Items for review in *The Source* should be sent to David J Jones at 31 Ward Street, Willoughby, NSW 2068.)

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