

REPORT
OF THE COUNCIL
1976



MONASH UNIVERSITY

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LIBRARY

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Academic and research libraries throughout the world have been caught between the rising costs of books and periodicals and the lowering of the financial support available. The problem is being felt particularly in Australia, whose currency levels had given some protection against the worst of the cost increases; when that protection was suddenly withdrawn by the November devaluation the wind blew very cold indeed.

The most serious effects will not be felt until 1977, but those periodical subscriptions which were paid in the last month or so of the calendar year were seriously inflated.

Book intake fell from the peak of 97,000 in 1975 to 57,000. The staff establishment was held at the 1975 level, though some unexpected supplementation made possible the employment of temporary staff at times through the year; this gave particular assistance to the cataloguing department which was faced with a heavy load from the previous year's intake and the incidence of long service leave. Some reorganization of cataloguing resulted in the cataloguing throughput being raised considerably. There has also been some reorganization of the acquisitions department and the Government publications section was expanded to include monographs as well as serials and came under the control of the humanities and social sciences librarian.

The last annual report noted that borrowing from the library was continuing to rise faster than the population served. This trend continued and was most marked in the humanities and social sciences library where a more liberal lending policy on overnight loans was clearly appreciated, this type of loan increasing by 142 per cent. Total loans across the system were 615,628, as against 540,000 in the previous year. It became clear that for such a volume of work the interim loan system, which depends on key-punched input to computer, was too labour-intensive and prone to human error, and investigations were conducted into alternative automatic data collection systems.

The concept of the library as part of a much wider network has been gaining acceptance for many years, and the constantly increasing inter-library loan traffic has underlined it. In 1976 loans reached 21,469 and borrowing also rose, to 7,468. However several developments in the year suggest that in this regard library cooperation is entering a quite new phase. On-line interrogation of bibliographical data bases is now a reality, and from September the biomedical library has been regularly conducting searches of the MEDLINE base mounted on the Department of Health computer in Canberra. A demonstration of access to the educational data base ERIC ran for three months between the RMIT and the National Library, and since Monash holds the massive microfiche file which supports the data base, the library has been pressing for access to it through a local computer bureau. This possibility has now been taken up by the National Library, with the chance (if finance can be found) of expansion into several other of the major data bases, or of construction of new ones, purely Australian.

At the same time, the long, desultory negotiations aimed at improving cooperation between the academic libraries, led at the beginning of the year to a survey by an outside consultant, of means to set up a joint office with its primary task the support of cooperative cataloguing. The consultants' report was received by the VUCC and the concept of CAVAL (Cooperative Action by Victorian Academic Libraries) has been recommended to participating institutions (including the State Library). The National Library is also promoting a joint cataloguing venture, and it is the firm hope of those associated with CAVAL that the two operations may be developed in double harness.

The biomedical library's pilot operation as a reference centre for the Australian Hospital Association ran for six months, with some help towards the staffing provided by the association. No finality has been reached in the matter of long-term funding, but the association's satisfaction with the services has been indicated by an extension of the temporary finance for a further six months. Information on a wide range of matters relating to hospital administration was supplied to inquirers from all across Australia.

The library welcomes the establishment of the Graduate School of Librarianship and believes that such a centre of expertise can only be of value, both in the provision of advice and assistance and in keeping staff conscious of goals and values beyond the immediate work situation.

It was the library's good fortune to be exposed to another searching eye when Professor Perry Morrison of the University of Oregon's School of Librarianship spent nine months in the library as a "participant observer". His day-to-day comments on the several departments in which he worked as well as his formal report at the end of the period were stimulating and provocative; the very anomaly of his experience and expertise as against his low nominal position in the organization made the newer attitudes and techniques he was able to impart so much more acceptable.

Several departments within the University have an interest in physical bibliography and it is therefore particularly appropriate that the library should now house a quite well-equipped printing shop, complete with an Albion press and a Columbian and an Arab jobbing press, as well as a cylinder press and a considerable collection of furniture and type. It is possibly symbolic of the Janus-like quality a modern library must display, that these working symbols of the nineteenth century should be housed in the next room to the library's data processing centre.

The presses, the equipment and the work involved in setting up the operation have all been donated, with the exception of the Albion, which is on indefinite loan by the trustees of the State Library. To them and the other donors we extend our thanks, as we do to those who each year support the library's book purchasing programme. Without them it would be the poorer; funds have never run to treasures and now will hardly support working acquisitions.

7. UNIVERSITY FACILITIES

Alexander Theatre

The year provided another full programme for the Alexander Theatre, with activities ranging from University lectures for the public to visits from international theatre productions such as the Canadian Mime Company. The theatre is now active in three main areas: (a) as a centre serving the academic and student needs of the University; (b) as a source of quality dramatic activities from the Alexander Theatre Company and from the entrepreneurial activities of the management committee; and (c) as a venue for community-based theatre.

Student use of the theatre is actively encouraged, and during term time the traditional groups—the Monash Players, the Monash University Musical Theatre Company, and the Modern Dance Club—made a significant contribution to the theatre's programme, together with regular screenings by the Monash Film Group. The annual pantomime, in 1976 *Jack and the Beanstalk*, was presented by an ad hoc student body, "Pan Pow '76", with great success and with considerable assistance from the theatre.

Grants from the Australian Council, the Victorian Ministry for the Arts, and the Vice-Chancellor of Monash University, together with the theatre's revenue from rentals and general trading, enabled the Alexander Theatre Company to complete its third year with a programme of four plays for adults and two productions for