



Australia

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IN 1896 THE FIRST Australasian Library Conference was held in Melbourne, Australia, and at that Conference the Library Association of Australasia (intended to cover libraries and librarians from both Australia and New Zealand) was formed. At this first Conference the Librarian of the Public Library of New South Wales, Mr. H. C. L. Anderson, “. . . said that he had found it advisable to hold classes in library economy for his juniors, and that he hoped the conference would consider the advisability of instituting some system of examinations for the whole of Australia, with the object of conferring diplomas on successful students. Such a diploma, he said, awarded by an inter-colonial board of examiners, should be as valuable as those given in the useful library schools of the United States.”¹

Mr. Anderson subsequently reported to the Second International Library Conference held in London in 1897 “I hold classes for the junior officers, which I have found invaluable for training these assistants to thoroughly understand our own system of cataloguing and indexing, and to deal intelligently with the public whom we serve.”²

Anderson's hope as expressed to that first Conference was not fulfilled, and this first library association in Australia ceased to function after six years, during which it had held three more conferences and published six numbers of a journal, the *Library Record of Australasia*. His plea for the importance of educating librarians was characteristic of those that were to follow some forty years later, and his attitudes were much the attitudes that still characterize education for librarianship in Australia. Anderson was interested in a national examining system; today this exists in Australia. Anderson considered the American schools “useful”; Australians charged with the tasks of drawing up the syllabi for examinations in librarianship have constantly had to meet the criticism that parts of the courses were not really “useful”

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to the librarian on the job. More than forty years later, in 1937 the Australian Institute of Librarians was formed. The qualifications required of foundation members of the Institute were: "A degree of an approved university, or a certificate of University matriculation, or a certificate of an equivalent general education, or a certificate of sufficient education from the principal librarian of his state or territory, together with five years experience in the case of non-graduates, and three years in the case of graduates in professional work in a library. . . ." ³

The first conference of the Institute, held in 1938, emphasized the importance of professional education for librarians. W. H. Ifould, speaking on "The Future of the Institute" said that the work required of the librarian ". . . necessarily entails intensive technical training and experience extending over a number of years, superimposed upon a sound university education or its equivalent." ⁴ He considered that ". . . one of the most urgent subjects for decision by this Institute is the setting of a general standard for library training in Australia, with special consideration for the needs of small municipal libraries." ⁵

The problems of training librarians for reference libraries, university libraries, parliamentary libraries, lending libraries, and special libraries were discussed in five papers given at this first conference. Some of the speakers described the training and requirements for professional librarianship in Great Britain and the United States, and Mr. F. L. S. Bell, who was later to be elected to the Board of Examination, Certification and Registration of Librarians, gave his advice to the young association in no uncertain terms. He finished his paper on "The Professional Librarian in the United States: His Status, Qualifications and Conditions" with this sentence: "If we are looking for a model on which to base the future organisation of our profession we must look across the Pacific to our American cousins." ⁶

In the year ending June 1939, the Council of the Institute elected a Standing Committee in Library Training and Standards. The Committee's object was ". . . to establish a standard of librarianship in Australia which should not be inferior to any standard anywhere." ⁷ This committee recommended the appointment of a Board of Examination and Certification. The setting up of the Board was approved in June 1940, and the Board was appointed to serve in 1941. The Board worked at drawing up a syllabus for examinations, and in June 1944, the first professional examinations of the Australian Institute of Librarians were held throughout Australia.

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Since 1944 the actual syllabus for these national examinations has been revised several times, and the possibility of other patterns of organization for education for librarianship have been discussed frequently. Foremost among these suggestions were those of visiting librarians, in the paper presented to the Seventh Conference of the Library Association of Australia by Elizabeth S. Hall and Wilma Radford⁸ and articles in the *Australian Library Journal*.⁹⁻²⁰

Visiting librarians who came to survey or to observe librarianship in Australia proposed various plans for the improvement of education for librarianship in the country. In 1934 Ralph Munn, bearing in mind the backward state of Australian libraries, suggested an apprenticeship system and urged the case for recruiting university graduates rather than sixteen year olds who have just left school.²¹ Lionel McColvin in 1947 urged the importance of teaching. He wanted to see two full-time library schools teaching for the examinations of the Australian Institute of Librarians, one in Sydney and one in Melbourne. In addition he urged the establishment of a school of research and advanced studies to be attached to the National University in Canberra.²² Similar views to McColvin's were expressed by E. H. Behymer, but Behymer—an American—was anxious that recruitment be at graduate level.²³

In 1949 the Australian Institute of Librarians became the Library Association of Australia, and in August 1963, the Association adopted a Royal Charter. Since 1941, however, the regulations governing the appointment of members of the Board of Examination, Certification and Registration of Librarians have remained essentially the same. The Board is appointed by the professional members of the General Council of the Association, for a period of from two to five years, “. . . provided that the Professional Members of the General Council may vary the membership of the Board and period of office of any of its members at any time.”²⁴ The objects of the Library Association of Australia are: (1) to promote, establish, and improve libraries and library services, (2) to improve the standard of librarianship and the status of the library profession, and (3) to promote the association for the foregoing objects of persons, societies, institutions and corporate bodies engaged or interested in libraries and library services.²⁵ The Board of Examination, Certification and Registration of Librarians is especially concerned with the second of these objects.

In setting up a national system of examinations, the Library Association of Australia (then the Australian Institute of Librarians) organized the examination of libraries in Australia along the lines of the

Library Association in Great Britain. There is, however, in the published proceedings and reports of the Library Association of Australia, in the statements of Australian librarians, and in the actual content of the examination syllabus, little to suggest that Australian libraries deliberately set out to copy the British Association. In actual fact, given the conditions that existed in 1940, it is difficult to see what other system for educating librarians could have been devised. There were only two centers of training and both of them were still in the experimental stage. A national Association was obliged to serve all its members, and a decision to accredit one school would not have been considered service and would not in fact have done much for Australian librarianship. The Association could not itself set up a school, for its total income in 1940 did not exceed 300 dollars per annum. It is dangerous to assume that the Australian system was in any but an organizational way, a conscious copying of the English one. Australian education for librarianship grew out of the desire of a professional association to improve the standards of Australian libraries. This Association was the child of the Munn-Pitt report on Australian libraries,²⁶ and the attending physician was John Metcalfe. As it is in general true to say that Melvil Dewey was the founder of American education for librarianship, so it is true to say that John Metcalfe was the founder of Australian education for librarianship. He was behind the New South Wales Library School; he was the convenor of the first Committee on Library Training and Standards and remained Chairman of the Board of Examination, Certification and Registration of Librarians until 1960.

A reading of the *Proceedings of the Australian Institute of Librarians* from its inception reveals the extent to which Australian librarians were looking to America. In 1934 Australian librarians had met an American colleague—"We were fortunate in the Carnegie Corporation's choice of Mr. Ralph Munn."²⁷ They had listened to his criticisms and had acted on them. Several Australian librarians had studied in the United States under grants from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The papers given at the conferences cover a wide field, but whether the speakers were concerned with library co-operation or country library service, with library training or with library work with children, the references to American practice and American literature outnumber those made to all other countries.

In 1944 the examinations of the Australian Institute of Librarians consisted of two groups: a Preliminary Examination and a Qualifying

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Examination. In 1963, after several changes, the Association has one Registration Examination. This examination consists of nine three-hour papers and is usually taken in three years, although the regulations allow students to sit for all the papers in two years. Those accepted for the examination must be qualified for matriculation at an Australian university and must be members of the Library Association of Australia.

The syllabus consists of seven compulsory subjects and two others to be chosen from nine. The compulsory subjects are: books and related materials; libraries; acquisition, organization and use of books and related materials; reference work and aids to research; library administration; cataloging; and classification. The optional papers include advanced cataloging and classification; book selection and collection building; history and comparative study of librarianship; production, publication, history and care of books; national, state and local collections, with special reference to Australia; school and children's libraries; and three papers on archives.

Candidates wishing to qualify for a Registration Certificate in Archives are required to pass the same number of papers, but the archives papers make up three of their compulsory seven.

In addition to the examination requirements, students must have three years of experience or training in librarianship and be twenty-one years of age before being eligible for the Registration Certificate.

Library Schools and University Schools

As was previously mentioned, the Public Library of New South Wales was holding some form of classes in librarianship before 1900, and in 1935 Dr. Ralph Munn reported that "The Public Library of New South Wales has a formal system of examinations and the Public Library of Victoria is planning one."²⁸ The examinations of the Public Library of New South Wales were Public Service Board examinations for library assistants and included papers on historical bibliography, library cataloging, classification, practical bibliography, and library administration.

In 1939 the Government of the State of New South Wales decided to adopt the recommendations of its Libraries Advisory Committee²⁹ and to legislate for a system of free public libraries throughout the State. In order to achieve this aim, the Government authorized the establishment of a Library School at the Public Library of New South Wales and made provision for the Library Board to issue certificates

to those persons who could satisfy the Board of their qualifications to act as librarians or library assistants. The Library School of the Public Library of New South Wales was the first school for librarians in the country, and students attended the school for lectures and practical work from 9:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M., five days a week.

The Public Library of Victoria set up a library school under the Free Library Service Board Act of 1946. This school offered a certificate of its own which is recognized by the governing bodies of municipal libraries. The school is primarily concerned with the public library field because most of its graduates go into municipal public libraries, and indeed the school was established to meet the needs of these libraries. Students at this school also prepare for the Registration Examination of the Library Association of Australia.

Since 1938 various courses and lectures on librarianship have been offered by the National Library of Australia. Some of these courses have been full-time courses for librarians appointed either to the staff of the National Library itself or to special Commonwealth governmental libraries. The courses have been a mixture of in-service training and coaching for the examinations of the Library Association of Australia. At the present time the courses cover the syllabus of the Library Association and admit not only local students but also people from other countries, notably the Asian-Pacific areas.

Courses designed to help students pass the Registration Examinations of the Library Association of Australia and to make them more competent members of the staffs of special libraries are held in several of the larger libraries. Among these are the State Library of Tasmania, the Public Library of South Australia, and the Library of the University of New England at Armidale.

In addition, some classes for the Registration examinations are held in technical colleges, notably in Western Australia and Queensland. In 1962 full-time courses in librarianship were established at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Victoria. The School is under the direction of Miss Jean Hagger, B.A., M.S. (University of Illinois Graduate School of Library Science), and while initially the students are studying the syllabus for the Registration Examination, the School plans to develop and teach its own curriculum.

In 1960 the first university School of Librarianship was established at the University of New South Wales. This School offered a full-time course of one academic year leading to a Diploma of librarianship. Only graduates holding degrees from a recognized university can

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qualify for this Diploma. The School is under the direction of John Metcalfe, M.A., F.L.A., who is also the University Librarian. Wilma Radford, B.A., B.S. (Columbia University, School of Library Service) is the Senior Lecturer at the School.

Beginning in 1964 the School will offer a course leading to a Master's degree in Librarianship. This M.Lib. course will have as prerequisites for registration or enrollment:

. . . a bachelor's or a higher degree in a subject other than librarianship and post graduate qualifications in librarianship. Requirements after registration are attendance at the university for not less than ninety hours of tutorials and seminars over three terms and completion of a thesis with attendance for supervision in not less than four terms from registration. . . . The course will not be an advanced practical course for seniors or administrators. It will be one of academic study of librarianship and related subjects, with specialization and an expectation of original work and contribution, especially in the thesis. A master's degree may however become an expected qualification for administrative and other senior positions and for teachers of librarianship especially if it becomes evidence of ability for basic thinking.³⁰

The University of Melbourne is about to introduce a course in librarianship. This will be a post-graduate course leading initially to a Diploma in librarianship and after two years to a degree in librarianship.

The Future

Australian librarians have always been interested in the education of librarians, and there is a growing interest in the definition of the "professional" aspects of librarianship and the differentiation of staff into "clerical," "technical," and "professional" grades. Ten years ago a questionnaire sent to the Australians most concerned with education for librarianship revealed that they placed great emphasis on practical experience and on the teaching of techniques, and many of them tended to distrust university education for librarianship because it might be too theoretical and too removed from the practical skills required in libraries. They were also loath to allow the existence of varying professional qualifications and inclined to think that their one national qualification should be retained.³¹ Today this attitude has changed.

In 1962 the General Council of the Library Association of Aus-

tralia approved a statement on Graduate Qualifications for Librarianship which had been drawn up by the Association's Board of Examination. This statement announced that the Association had accepted the fact that librarians should be university graduates, and the statement gave notice that at some date to be determined it would require members to be university graduates:

There is a strong and growing tendency in Australia to regard as fully professional only those occupations which require university qualifications. It appears to the Board that the instinct or judgment thus displayed by society at large is soundly based for the following reasons:

- a. University education is no longer restricted to a privileged minority, it is open to those who have the necessary ability and character.
- b. A professional man or woman should display not merely expertise but wisdom; it is a function of education to develop wisdom and a profession should, therefore, require a high standard of education in those seeking admission to its membership.
- c. New entrants to most of the professions whose standing is beyond question are today, in Australia, required to undertake university studies.

. . . Therefore, the Board considers that unless the Association, within the not distant future, requires all new entrants to full professional standing to be not only qualified in librarianship but also graduates, society at large will not accord them professional status.³²

In August 1963 the Library Association of Australia adopted a Royal Charter. Under this Charter:

"The General Council may, with the consent of the Board of Examiners, confer on a member proficient in librarianship the distinction of 'Fellow of the Library Association of Australia', or of 'Associate of the Library Association of Australia.'" ³³

All present professional members of the Association will become Associates of the Association and will be entitled to use the letters A.L.A.A. The Association has decided to implement the statement on Graduate Qualifications for Librarianship, and after June 1967, professional membership, and therefore, Associateship, will no longer be open to non-graduates. After this date members will have to have passed all the professional examinations, have had three years experience and hold a degree from a recognized university before becoming eligible for election to Associateship. Non-graduates who have

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passed the examinations and had the requisite experience will be known as Licentiates of the Library Association of Australia.

The distinction of Fellow will be conferred, by the Council on the recommendation of the Board of Examiners, on professional members of at least eight years standing, who, being thirty years of age or older, "have made a distinguished contribution to the theory or practice of librarianship."

The Association has declared that it favors the establishment of library schools at universities and has appointed a Committee on University Schools of Librarianship to further its objectives. At present there is one university level school of librarianship in the country, and there will probably be another one by 1965. In addition, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology will probably begin to teach from its own syllabus rather than from the syllabus for the Registration Examination in the near future. Other technical colleges are considering establishing courses in librarianship.

At the same time entries for the Association's examinations continue to rise. The Registration Certificate is now held by some 550 librarians, although suffering as it must from all the disadvantages of an external examination system, it is a qualification which is respected and which is written into employment and salary agreements all over the country as a proof of the professional training of a librarian. In November 1963, about 1,000 students in about fifty different centers and as far away as Bangkok, London, and Fiji will sit for this examination.

The Board of Examination, Certification and Registration will become the "Board of Examiners" under the Royal Charter, but its essential function will remain the same, viz., to maintain the standards of librarianship in Australia. Up to the present time the Board has been primarily concerned with the drawing up of syllabi, the setting and conduct of examinations, and the certification of individual candidates, but as more and more schools of librarianship are established the Board expects to be more concerned with standards of accreditation. At present, a student who has passed all the examinations of the University of New South Wales School of Librarianship will be accepted (after fulfilling the requirement of three years' experience or training) as a candidate for election to professional membership in the Association.

The strength of Australian education for librarianship has been the establishment of a national examining body issuing certificates that

are recognized throughout the country as proof of professional knowledge. The Board has managed to insist that its examinations are designed to turn out librarians or archivists rather than special librarians, children's librarians, or public librarians. The examinations insist on a common core of subjects as being basic to the study of librarianship.

Paradoxically this strength can also be seen as a weakness. Australian librarians have in the past tended to know the same things; the compulsory core of subjects has limited the chance to specialize; the external examination system, divorced from the teacher and the library, has led to a neglect of actual "book knowledge."

The future of advanced education for librarianship lies with graduate schools of librarianship offering degrees in librarianship. It will, however, be many years before there are enough of these schools to allow the Library Association of Australia to cease examining. Until that day comes the examinations of the Association will continue to play an important part in the education of Australia's librarians.

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