

THE AUSTRALIAN BIBLIOGRAPHIC NETWORK AND AUSTRALIAN THEOLOGICAL LIBRARIES

Trevor Zweck

The Australian Bibliographic Network is into its eighth year of operation yet it still includes among its full service participants only one theological library; search and products users number only one and inquiry only users likewise only one! Yet 350 libraries around Australia are full service users and another 550 are various levels of user of ABN. Could 1,000 Australian libraries be wrong and 50 theological libraries among the few wise in our land? Or could the truth lie somewhere in the opposite direction? I have contended elsewhere¹ that theological libraries should be involved in this pan-Australian network; experience of the benefits of being a search and products user since the beginning of 1989 confirm the conviction that Australian theological libraries (individually and collectively) have nothing to lose and a great deal to gain from active participation. Averill Edwards, President of the Australian Library and Information Association, warns: "Online networks are the way of the future - unless theological college libraries join in, they will be left behind to flounder in an increasingly small backwater with ever decreasing resources."²

BENEFITS OF ABN

Theological libraries in Australia and New Zealand are increasingly becoming aware of the need to work together to maintain and to improve the quality of their services to users. The existence of the Australian and New Zealand Theological Library Association and the friendly spirit which pervades its conferences and chapter meetings is ample evidence of this. But feelings are not enough; it is concerted action that is going to put required information into the hands of our users. Since

¹ Trevor Zweck, "The Future of Theological Libraries in Australia and New Zealand," *ANZTLA Newsletter* 6 (Dec. 1988), p.9.

² Averill M.B. Edwards, "Libraries and Librarians: an Undervalued Asset", *ANZTLA Newsletter* 6 (Dec. 1988), p.22.

none of us can provide all the information needs of our users, we need to share our holdings and the information about those holdings; and there is no more efficient and effective way that we in Australia can do so than through ABN. An effective use of the National Bibliographic Database can not only inform other libraries of the location of sought-after items, it can also inform our own acquisition practices and avoid the costly duplication of expensive materials. Co-operation in collection development will be further aided by the introduction of conspectus data in the next few years.³

A second reason for choosing to use ABN is the improvement it will mean in the quality of a library's cataloguing. For those not yet adapted to AACR2 cataloguing rules, it will mean an obvious improvement in descriptive cataloguing - though there is also an alarming amount of inferior descriptive cataloguing in the database: interim records with some of the data missing, cataloguing-in-publication records likewise, and even records from some cataloguing agencies (notably in Britain) which simply don't follow the rules! But the real benefit is in the area of subject headings. Whether it is because the cataloguers have more time to study the contents of the book, or because they have greater expertise in the allocation of subject headings, or superior subject expertise, or a combination of all three, the fact is that the records from national agencies and leading libraries which gain precedence in the database have considerably more subject tracings than are found on the cards of most (if not all) theological library catalogues. This means vastly improved access to information for library users.

A third compelling reason for involvement in ABN is the cold, harsh reality of simple economics. The chief purpose behind the establishment of ABN in 1982 was to share the effort expended in cataloguing and to avoid the pointless duplication of effort of dozens, maybe hundreds, of libraries around the country cataloguing the same item over and over again. In theory, it would be necessary for only one person in the whole world to expend that effort, if the information thus obtained could be adequately shared. While people originally had their

³ Warwick Cathro, "ABN's Services in 1995", *ABN News* 43 (Jan.-Feb. 1989, p.9.

doubts, the continued success of ABN is abundant proof of the extent to which this principle does work in practice. Libraries use ABN because it pays them to do so! In today's harsh economic climate, poverty-stricken theological libraries simply cannot afford not to be in ABN!

The experience of Luther Seminary Library since the beginning of 1989 shows that copy-cataloguing data can be extracted from the ABN database in a fraction of the time it takes to write it out by hand, and that it can be done for less than 50 cents an item. The 1985 statistical survey of ANZATS libraries revealed that more than 50% of all staff time in theological libraries is taken up with technical processing.⁴ If this time can be more than halved - as Luther's experience shows it can - it will be possible to substantially contain rising costs and will release much staff time for more productive purposes.

COPY-CATALOGUING ON ABN

The ABN database was created by bringing together the comprehensive records of a number of national agencies, most of which dated from around about 1970. To this have been added retrospective entries, together with current records from a huge variety of national agencies and libraries. Today, the database contains more than six million records with more than eight million holdings statements added. Because of the comprehensiveness of the database from about 1970 on, and because of the simplicity of doing so, it was decided at Luther to do copy-cataloguing on all items bearing an ISBN. Using this strategy, we have consistently attained a hit rate (i.e. of items found on the database for copying) for English language materials of more than 95%. A test run of 48 German publications, by contrast, yielded a hit rate of just over 40% (the actual number being 20). In simple terms, just about all the English language material is already on the database. It is again a very simple operation to add our call number and print off a copy of the record.

⁴Trevor Zweck, "Australian and New Zealand Theological Library Statistics 1985", *ANZTLA Newsletter* 2 (Aug. 1985), p.9.

To catalogue *Christianity in the People's Republic of China* would require the following commands:

f i 0804214859 \$,f

HNEW 1 MR5 B813

The ten-digit ISBN is preceded by f = "find" and i = "ISBN" and followed by \$,f, which is a request for a catalogue-card type of display. After this record is thrown up on the screen, HNEW is the instruction to the computer to register a new holding in the name of the library (i.e. its national symbol) which earlier signed on to the system. 1 specifies the first item on the screen (only rarely is there more than one) and the rest is our call number (Petee Classification number plus Cutter number). Because we use a non-standard classification, we have to assign a classification number in advance; since Dewey numbers are almost always provided, they can be added by Dewey users as they appear on the screen.

While this strategy has been very successful, we soon found that it was also very easy to search using the command: f r followed by the LC card number or an abn or bnb number, or by the command: f t followed by several key words of the title. We also quickly found that we had to learn how to delete an incorrectly entered holdings statement with the command: HDEL followed by the incorrect information we had typed in. (You can't do this till the next day).

With a little practice, the two operations involved can be effected in less than two minutes; a person with reasonably competent keyboard skills will get it down to about one. Since connect time costs 20 cents a minute, and each record copied from the database costs 14 cents, the cost can easily be computed at less than 65 cents. When a holding is added, a credit of 41 cents is given. If no holding statement is added (as in the case when the search is unsuccessful or an invalid command is inadvertently typed in), there is a 24 cents charge for each such command in addition to the charge for connect time. For budgeting purposes, it would be wise to allow for about one in four such unsuccessful attempts, some of which are caused by a glitch in the computer. The only other charge which needs to be taken into consideration as far as ABN is

concerned is the \$100 annual service charge for a Search and Products user.

OTHER FEATURES OF ABN

The National Bibliographic Database also serves as a location tool for inter-library loans, indicating which Australian library/libraries hold a required item. The success of this feature depends, of course, on libraries being willing to submit holdings information; it is in order to encourage libraries to do so that ABN provides such generous credit for the addition of holdings. (It is possible to copy records from the database without adding holdings information, but in this case you are charged for inquiry commands and, of course, receive no holdings credits).

It is already possible for a small group of full service users to place orders for inter-library loans through ABN and it is intended to extend this facility to all others, including dial-up users.

A further feature of ABN is that it can be used to provide machine-readable (MARC) records for your local library's present or - more likely! - future online catalogue. Since all your holdings are flagged with your library's symbol, it is technologically quite simple to download all such items onto magnetic tape for transfer to your local system. It is even possible to down-load such records - but at a substantial cost.

Other enhancements being developed by ABN include an acquisitions system (for online ordering from suppliers), enhanced subject headings, directory information and collection development (conspectus) data. Enhanced subject headings, which consist essentially of including contents or index data in the cataloguing record, is currently being field tested by a small group of major libraries in a limited subject area.

REQUIREMENTS FOR DIAL-UP ACCESS

Dial-up access to the IBM 3081K mainframe computer at the National Library of Australia requires no specific training and minimal equipment. ABN requirements are:

1. a terminal - TTY33 or TTY35 (i.e. teletype) compatability;
ASCII character set and asynchronous communications;
RS232-C interface; 300 or 1200 bps transmission;
and (desirably) X-ON (DC1) and X-OFF (DC3)
for flow control.
The ABN handbook lists more than 300 makes which have been successfully used. At Luther, we discovered we already had such a terminal (a WYSE WY50) and a modem (Sendata 300) elsewhere on campus.
2. a modem - 300 or 1200 bps range
3. a telephone - either standard or datel.

While not absolutely essential, a printer is also very desirable - obviously so if (like Luther) you want to generate your own catalogue cards, but also useful for checking your search and input procedures. An alternative to the simple terminal is a PC (which of course can be used for other purposes), but in this case a communications software package (e.g. "Crosstalk") is also required. (The cost is about \$50).

CALCULATING COSTS

The costs of establishing a dial-up facility consist of the prices of the above equipment and an initial service charge (joining fee). For top-of-the-range equipment we were quoted: terminal \$1200, modem \$900, printer \$1200; however, it should be possible to obtain very adequate equipment for half those prices. Installation of the modem by Telecom may cost \$600. The joining fee is \$150 for a Search and Products user. Thus, it should be possible to get established for about \$2500.

Estimating recurrent expenses is more complicated and depends largely on options chosen. The following example assumes that: (a) the library will print its own cards from a

computer printout; (b) 500 books are submitted for copy-cataloguing, with a hit rate of 90%; and (c) that copy-cataloguing takes an average of two minutes connect time. It should be noted that you are charged for unsuccessful searches or for invalid commands.

The service charge will be \$100 per annum. Communications charges will add up to \$200 (500 x 2 minutes x 20 cents). The cost of unsuccessful searches will be balanced out by the shorter connect time involved. Inquiry charges (based on a failure rate inflated to 20% to allow for second attempts, typing mistakes, computer glitches, etc.) will add up to about \$144 (600 x 24 cents). Products (i.e. printouts of the records chosen), which have to be counted by the user and reported to ABN every three months, will cost \$63 (450 x 14 cents). Against these costs, ABN will allow credits of \$184.50 (450 x 41 cents). Total cost therefore would be \$322 per annum, or 65 cents per item.

At this stage, you still have to produce your catalogue cards or purchase them from ABN at about \$1.20 a set. We have found it advisable to generate our own cards, as it is possible to edit the computer printout before sending it to the typist and we think we can produce them for much less than ABN would charge. If you are fortunate enough to be automated, you can, of course, get your cataloguing records in virtually any kind of computer format.

If you maintain authority files, these still have to be done also. This is an aspect of copy-cataloguing which will probably take more time, as ABN records typically contain more subject tracings than the average theological cataloguer would usually assign. The pay-off here, of course, is greatly improved access to information for library users.

Copy-cataloguing leads inevitably also to the streamlining of the workflow in the technical processing area. The book is actually in the hands of the cataloguer for a much shorter time and the various operations (classifying, cutting, end-processing, authority work) become segmented. Thus you don't become so familiar with the books during the cataloguing process; if all goes well, you may be hardly aware of the author or title or subject of the book you have just catalogued. But

then, of course, with all the time you are saving, you may actually have time to pick up a book and read it occasionally!

THE FULL SERVICE OPTION

The dial-up mode of access has been described (and was chosen by Luther) because it is the cheapest and simplest option. It does at present however have one substantial limitation: it is not possible to add one's original cataloguing to the ABN database. But this soon is to change; it is confidently expected that original cataloguing will be possible for dial-up users by 1990. It will require greater expertise on the part of the cataloguer, as data must be input in the form of MARC (Machine Readable Cataloguing) records. This involves inputting the same information as would be included in a fairly full record in a more precise format than is done on a catalogue card. It is not particularly difficult for a trained or experienced cataloguer to adapt to, but ABN does insist on a full two-week training session for persons wishing to contribute original cataloguing and thus becoming full service users. (The cost is \$435).

Full service membership of ABN is also available through the leased-line mode of access (as is the case with St Mark's Library, Canberra). This requires more sophisticated equipment, which must be carefully chosen in consultation with ABN to ensure compatibility with the National Library computer. In this mode, ABN charges an overall monthly rental instead of the full range of charges to individual operations. It also pays a much higher credit for original copy contributed (\$3.93 an item). Economically, it pays to be a leased-line user if you are doing more than 8 hours' work on ABN a month (or 96 a year).

JOINING ABN

For theological librarians, the biggest obstacle to joining ABN may well be convincing their administration of the advisability of doing so. If this paper will help, you are welcome to use it. While the philosophical and altruistic reasons for joining ABN are the really important ones the economic one is quite

compelling and should be sufficient to sway the most recalcitrant or reluctant committee.

Thereafter, it is simply a matter of purchasing the equipment and making application to ABN. Warwick Cathro, Director of Network Services, has made it clear that ABN is very keen to gain the membership of special libraries such as ours, realizing that they have substantial holdings of very specialized materials. So the approval of ABN is not likely to be any real problem. If you require further help, you should contact the ABN Help Desk on 008 02 6155. They will send you an application form and any other necessary information.



THE AUSTRALASIAN RELIGION INDEX : A PROGRESS REPORT

Philip Harvey

For members of the Editorial Management Committee in Melbourne, the months of March and April have been filled with all but feverish activity. Firstly, following recommendations from a number of ANZTLA members, the serial titles to be indexed in the first volume were selected, some fifty-five of them. Then fifteen indexers were asked to work on these.

Arns, Hans (St. Patrick's College, Manly, NSW)
Bright, Judith (St. John's, Auckland)
Cain, Hal (Queen's College; Ridley College, Parkville, Vic)
Carswell, Pam (Joint Theological Library, Parkville, Vic)
Cole, Kay (Corpus Christi, Clayton, Vic)
Davis, Wendy (St. Barnabas College, Adelaide)
Greenwood, Helen (St. John's, Auckland)
Harvey, Philip (Joint Theological Library, Parkville, Vic)
Leggett, Jean (Corpus Christi, Clayton, Vic)