

THE BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

BULLETIN

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The following letter has been received from Margery C. Ramsay, Principal Librarian, State Library of Victoria, in response to the editorial in issue No. 15:

In the *Bulletin* of November 1979 Harold Love deplored, editorially, the general unwillingness of the State Library to allow readers to bring books into the Library.

We do not enjoy imposing restrictions on members of the public and scholars. Unfortunately, experience both in Australia and overseas suggests that the need for security is increasing rather than decreasing and libraries such as the State Library with many rare and valuable items cannot afford to act as if they did not exist. Security involves much more, of course, than checking readers' books as they leave the Library; it is a complex problem and an expensive one.

Another reason for restricting the entry of books is the purpose for which the State Library exists. Its primary function is to provide facilities for the study of the Library's own materials, and I believe there are good reasons why it should not become a study-hall for readers wishing to study their own books.

The general prohibition does not apply, however, to instances of the kind raised by Dr. Love. Staff are instructed that when a book is needed for comparison with a library copy it may be brought in. The same applies to the many books on which we are asked for advice.

Readers wishing to bring books into the Library can smooth the path for themselves by raising the matter in advance with the relevant department just as they do almost invariably when they wish to use original manuscripts or other materials from closed collections.

I hope this brief reply will facilitate use of the resources which the State Library offers and that occasionally a bibliographer will say "hurrah for security" when he finds that the work he wants to consult is still there.

I also hope that in case of any further difficulties Dr. Love and his fellows will come and discuss their problems. Not once in the six years since I became Principal Librarian have I been approached on this matter by Dr. Love or by any other members of the Society.

We are grateful to Philip Parr for allowing us to reproduce the substance of his privately-printed booklet, *History of Hobby Printing in Australasia*, produced at the Aspect Press, Titahi Bay, earlier this year.

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