

## The Housden Lectures

The Housden lectures were begun by SLAV in 1969 as:

*... a symbol of our appreciation of a man who was not only one of the leading figures in the formation of the association but played an important role in the growth of the School Libraries in Victoria.*

*Mr C. A. (Bert) Housden became unofficial librarian at the Albert Street, Brunswick, Primary School in 1946. He then became one of the first teacher-librarians and was eventually appointed as library services officer, a position he held from 1951 to 1968. This was a period of great expansion for libraries in Victorian Government schools and his enthusiasm and ability had much to do with this fact. His expertise and knowledge were recognised by his appointment in 1969 as a member of the Commonwealth Library Committee (Richard, 1969).*

Beginning in 1969, the Annual C. B. Housden Lecture ended in the 1990s. Not all of the lectures remain, but enough do for us to get a taste for some of the issues being discussed when each respective lecture was given. While many things have changed dramatically, and in most cases for the better, on some occasions one could be mistaken for thinking the lecture was being given now.

Over the decades, some important local commentators and overseas guests have presented the lecture, and in this, SLAV's 50th year, it seems timely to revisit their views and ideas by publishing an extract, a brief taste, of their presentations.

### 1969

#### Participation, creativity and achievement

***Dr R.A. Richards, Faculty of Politics and Economics, Monash University***

"Looking back on my early years as a student in the State education system I realise, perhaps better than most of you, the changes that have taken place, with the emergence of the library as a formally recognised unit in the school, with its own 'raison d'etre'. Its very existence symbolises the possibility of students searching for knowledge rather than quietly accepting academic impressions.

"The nature of the library's resources and its use by teaching staff are, of course, relevant. I have the impression that considerable progress has been made toward an ideal teaching situation in which students are highly motivated to search out knowledge for its own sake and as an aid to problem solving, to become actively involved in the educational process, to value creativity and achievement (Standards for Secondary School Libraries – a preliminary statement, Department of Education and Science, Canberra, 1969). Necessarily, the librarian will be involved in these new developments, an exciting prospect for any profession. What will be the precise role of the school librarian is not immediately apparent – the path of educational development will be known only after the event – but we are sure that your potential contribution is substantial. One may view your role as a catalyst in an educational process, the end result of which is to convert an immature child into a person able to search available knowledge to solve problems, no longer indoctrinated but self motivated, able to take an active, satisfying part in society. Underlying this process is an assumption that these qualities you seek to develop in students have some relevance to the future life and work of students, that the world will be a better place for the change" (page iii).

1971

**From the Trial of Lady Chatterley to the Trial of Oz: Some footnotes on a decade, particularly with reference to literary censorship**

***Emeritus Professor Zelman Cowen, Vice-Chancellor, University of Queensland***

"This lecture does not end with a definitive conclusion. This is not for want of thought of concern about the matter . . . I am a libertarian, but I have a concern for a coherent and honourable set of community values. Perhaps I can leave this rostrum with a reference to Professor H. M. Clor's thoughtful and moderate *Obscenity and Morality*:

*People are influenced by what they think others believe and particularly by what they think are the common standards of the community. There are few individuals among us whose basic beliefs are the result of their own reasoning and whose moral opinions do not require the support of some stable public opinion. The free circulation of obscenity can, in time, lead many to the conclusion that there is nothing wrong with the values implicit in it – since their own promulgation is tolerated by the public. They will come to the conclusion that public standards have changed – or that there are no public standards. Private standards are hard put to withstand the effects of such an opinion.*

"It may well be that this cannot be validated by the empirical methods of the social sciences, but I think that a world or a society in which anything goes – in the area of which we have been speaking – is likely to be an ugly one. I think that there is an educative force in law and restraint: good and wise law and restraint, and, in this area, not too much of it."

1973

**Developing an Effective Resource Centre in the Educational Program of the School**

***Dr Maurice Balson, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Monash University***

**"Resource-based learning program**

Australian education is poised on the threshold of a great thrust forward which will result in a dynamic approach to quality education for each child. The speed with which quality education will become available to all students will depend on our acceptance of a school system organised in such a way as to secure the benefits which advances in knowledge, particularly knowledge of the learning process, make possible.

"I would advocate the adoption of a resource-based learning program, implemented through individualisation, organised for continuous progress education. Many schools are currently responding favourably to such a suggestion. In others, even the most modest structural changes embraced by team teaching and nongrading have been blunted on school and classroom door. It is the school's apparent impotence in either holding against, or providing direction for, powerful currents of change that gives rise to the question, 'Are our schools obsolete?'.

"Schools must change if they are to survive. The mass media, backed by powerful communications industries, are capable of and considerably interested in filling the void which will be created if formal schools are judged obsolete. A critical question with respect to change is: 'What agencies or individuals provide the impetus and direction for change?'.

"Librarians appear to have two useful options relating to their role in the process of education change.

- 1) They can become sophisticated consumers of change by developing the ability to recognise and reject poor and/ or inappropriate change programs and by developing their ability to enhance the installation and implementation of acceptable change programs.
- 2) They can become change experts themselves i.e. serve as prime change agents in their school programs. (page viii)

"The librarian who would become an effective change agent should heed Machiavelli's sixteenth century warning that 'there is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things'. To this warning should be added the thought that there is nothing more gratifying or important within the school library profession than the successful introduction of a new order of things in Australian education" (page xi).

## 1975

### Faith and works: Evaluation of school libraries and media centre services

**Professor Perry D. Morrison, School of Librarianship, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon, USA**

"Some of you may have noted that I have said nothing about the 'standards' approach to evaluation. This is because it is becoming increasingly evident that we have gone about as far as we can with standards as presently conceived. Present standards for media centres, for the most part, refer only to input and assume that if the centre has enough space, equipment, materials and staff, all will be well. We are now being called upon to validate that assumption. Future standards, for better or worse, will be based more on actual delivery of services rather than on availability of means . . . . Would that standards could be based on actual effect on the lives of students, but that is far in the future, at best" (page 8).

## 1976

### The future of literacy

**Dennis Pryor, MA, Senior Lecturer in Classical Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Melbourne**

"Once a new technology is discovered it is no good hoping it will just go away. In the last decades of the twentieth century there is a failure of nerve in the face of new technologies. Yet the answer must be to come to terms with the new technologies and to work towards making satisfactory use of them. We have to ask whether media technologies are destroying literacy or simply changing the profile of what we used to call literacy. Nostalgia is perilous. (page v)

". . . Not that coming to terms with media technologies is easy. The trouble with electronic media, particularly television, is that it does not have the slightest idea what it is there for. (page v)

". . . Our present concepts of literacy have been formed in a society which no longer exists . . . . We are now in a new kind of society where we cannot measure the changes by looking at the old clocks. What we have to do is work at examining the new media. Those who operate the media don't know what they are doing. The schools and school libraries are in similar ignorance. They are places

where you go when your parents can't stand you any longer and industry doesn't want you yet. They may be the only places where we can come to terms with new kinds of information, processed in new kinds of ways. It is a long enquiry and a wide enquiry" (page viii).

## 1981

### Information, education and human resource development: The information explosion and its threats

**Barry Jones MP**

#### "The Fragmentation of Knowledge

Australia is an 'information society' in which most people are employed in collecting, storing, retrieving, amending, and disseminating data that are producing food, fibres and minerals, and manufacturing products . . . The 'information society' is marked by an . . . unprecedentedly rapid increase in the volume of readily accessible knowledge, often called the 'information explosion'. This phenomenon poses social and political problems.

"Access to knowledge, capital or wealth is roughly equivalent and there is a widening gap between the 'information rich' and the 'information poor' in which the unskilled become an intellectual proletariat (page iii).

". . . If 50 years ago, we had been able to hover over a city in a balloon and were told: 'In this city, 80 percent of its inhabitants are now reading but they are read only four books', we would be certain that the city was either part of a theocracy or that it was a dictatorship. What can be said of a society in which 80 per cent of its inhabitants freely chose to watch four highly repetitive channels? Has the universal presence of television made the balloon story irrelevant? (page ix).

". . . Does the control of and access to information resources necessarily have to be the preserve of the few? There are significant barriers to egalitarian access to information in Australia.

"We have only seen the first stages of the 'information revolution'. The next stage will see a further integration of computerised and telecommunications – 'telematics' as Nora and Minc call it – which will provide instant access to information stored anywhere in the world to anybody who can operate a telephone. The relationship between computers and telecommunications is an illustration of 'synergy' – combined or co-ordinated action where two things multiply the impact of the other" (page x).

## 1983

### Information and freedom

**Hon. Mr Justice M. D. Kirby, Chairman of the Australian Law Reform Commission**

"This review has been a 'Cook's tour' of the freedom of information laws enacted in a number of jurisdictions in recent months.

"The British system of administration had many fine qualities. But openness was not one of them. One bureaucrat told the Franks Committee inquiring into the British Secrets Act in 1971:

Once you embark on the business of striptease of government where do you stop?

"To this a Peer of the Realm responded:

Do you not think that instead of seven veils there are about 77? Are you frightened of trying to get a few off?"

"The veils of secrecy which surround public administration on post-Imperial British countries are now at last being stripped away. There need be no fear. There is no great risk of unseemly immodesty. A number of veils will always remain . . .

". . . Whether it is Ottawa or Wellington, Canberra or Melbourne, the new regime is now undoubtedly with us. The debates will continue about:

- The extent of the exemptions
- The cost of access
- The time limit for providing access
- The effectiveness of the review machinery
- The extension of FOI laws to other jurisdictions, particularly in Australia
- The complexity of the legislation, with its maze of gateways to be negotiated by client and judge alike
- The aggregation of experience so that the recalcitrant may be encouraged to embrace the new principle of openness.

"But we have undoubtedly entered a new era. Its jurisdiction has been described in these terms:

*Fundamental to our way of life is the belief that when information which properly belongs to the public is systematically withheld by those in power, the public soon become ignorant of their own affairs, distrustful of those who manage them and – eventually – incapable of determining their own destinies.*

The person who said this was Richard Nixon. And he had cause to know what he was talking about."

## Silver Jubilee – 1984

### The fragile consensus: Management of human resources for 2000AD

***Emeritus Professor W.G Walker, A.M, Chief Executive and Principal, The Australian Administrative Staff College, Mount Eliza, Victoria***

"Management is, of course, the key function in the efficient and effective use of human resources. No principal, no teacher, no librarian can ignore its significance.

The management of schools presents immense problems. Schools exist to transmit the cultural heritage – to show citizens what the 'cultural heritage' is. In that process educational managers must decide what priorities they will assign the various parts of the heritage in the curriculum. Furthermore, irrespective of the nature of quality of the curriculum the effective transmission of the heritage depends upon the achievement of a harmonious, if fragile, relationship among the three key components of the educative process: teacher, pupil and parent" (page v).

“ . . . I wish to present to you my ten assumptions about Australia in the year 2000. These have been discussed at length with leading Australians across the managerial community at large, but I do not expect you to accept all of them. What I do expect you to do, as you listen to them, is to ask yourselves what implications they have for schools, school libraries and human resources generally as you look ahead 15 years or so:

- The population of Australia will grow very slowly, the chief contributors to growth being limited migration and greater longevity.
- The proportion of Australians employed in primary and secondary industry will continue to decline slowly, while the proportion employed in tertiary and quaternary industry will increase.
- The proportion of unemployed will not vary greatly from the present figures and youth unemployment will remain a major problem.
- The demand for shorter working hours, weeks and years will grow apace, with resulting industrial confrontation.
- Public and legislative concern for citizens' rights, including those of women, the disadvantaged and Aborigines, will continue.
- The national political stance in favour of multi-culturalism will continue, irrespective of the party in power.
- Technological progress will continue at an accelerating rate.
- Leisure, allied with hedonism and a swing from stoic to epicurean attitudes, will place new strains on traditional value systems.
- The contemporary public and legislative disenchantment with most formal education will continue.
- The recognition that Australia is an Asian rather than a European island will grow apace.

" . . . The implications of some are quite disturbing and might be difficult for you to face up to. Perhaps you are reminded of Chesterton's observation: 'I have seen the truth and it makes no sense!'.

"As contemporary librarians you are observing the growth of the electronic at the gradual expense of the human. Putting this in another way, you are becoming as concerned with the management of capital resources as you are with human resources. Nonetheless, I believe the day will never come when you can manage entirely without human resources.

"You should be thinking deeply about what your responsibilities really are. Lord Samuel once described a library as 'thought in cold storage'. Today, knowing the proportion of optic fibres sprouting from cabinets, it might be more accurate to refer to a library as 'thought in hot storage'" (page vi-vii).

## 1987

### Whither school library management in the Ministry restructure?

**Kevin Collins, General Manager, Schools Division, Ministry of Education, Victoria**

"I don't believe there is any question as to the **value** of school libraries – now or into the future; they are fundamental to the teacher/learning process.

"Rather, the question is what will be the **extent** of their role, and the answer, I think, depends on five inter-related factors:

- The perception of the school community – the principal, teachers, parents and students – of the function of a school library;
- The image of teacher-librarians and how well they compete successfully for resources both within the school and the Ministry;
- What the professional role of the teacher-librarian should be within the school;
- What strategies they can develop to operate effectively at a time of finite resources and increasing demands; and
- How they are able to harness the so-called ‘information explosion’ by using technology in the organisation, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information to improve student learning” (page iii).