people of the Jamaican Military Band. The cadets also carried and raised the IASL flag. Song and dance performances, including a costumed dance by the children of nearby St Anne’s Bay Primary School, enhanced the Jamaican flavour of the ceremony.

The conference was officially opened by the Governor-General of Jamaica, His Excellency the Most Honorable Howard Cooke, who also attended the opening reception and met many of the overseas delegates.

The Governor-General of Jamaica, Sir Howard Cooke, opening the 25th IASL Conference in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, on 28 July.

A founder of IASL, Dr Jean E. Lowrie, the retiring Executive Secretary, was presented with a copy of a book that was launched at the Opening Ceremony, Sustaining the Vision: A Collection of Articles and Papers on Research in School Librarianship, in Honor of Jean E. Lowrie. This publication reflected two of Jean’s enduring professional concerns:

The IASL in Jamaica—’No problems!’

Laurel A. Clyde

JAMAICANS say ‘no problems’ when asked if they are worried or ‘She’ll be right, mate!’

A tax to the market? No problems! A missing bundle of conference handouts? No problems! An Internet connection malfunctioning? No problems!

It was not surpised to find, then, when I got to the aforementioned market, that one of the best-selling items was a T-shirt that said ‘Jamaica, no problems!’ However, just as the Australian ‘no worries’ is not an indication that you should stop worrying, so the Jamaican ‘no problems’ is not a promise that life will be free of frustrations.

Thus it was that this year’s International Conference of School Librarianship (IASL) conference, held at Ocho Rios, northern Jamaica, in the last week of July, was a sometimes frustrating mixture of the excellent and the pedestrian, organisational chaos and chaos, friendship and whatever is the reverse.

The conference highlights (and there were many) were not always those that the organisers had planned, just as some of the problems probably could not have been anticipated by planning.

Nevertheless, on balance, the week-long experience was positive, especially in terms of interaction among delegates from twenty-one countries. However, the conference venue, a large and expensive, all-inclusive resort hotel, effectively isolated delegates from the real Jamaica, yet these people who were able to venture out found that Jamaica beyond the gates of the Jamaica Grande Hotel was much more interesting, both professionally and culturally, than the somewhat sanitised Jamaica of the conference.

An Anniversary

This conference was a special one in the life of the association, in that it marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the formal establishment of IASL. In the early 1960s, school librarians attending meet-
IASL Special Programs & Awards

IASL/UNESCO Cooperative Action Program helps provide books for school libraries in developing countries—Africa, Asia, the South Pacific, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean.

School Library Leadership Development Fund assists in bringing leaders in the field of education and libraries from developing countries to the Annual Conference of the International Association of School Librarianship.

Support-A-Member is a gift program designed to make it possible for school librarians, teacher-librarians, media specialists, library assistants and others interested in school library service who are living in developing countries to belong to the International Association of School Librarianship.

The Association Assembly provides a forum at the IASL Annual Conference for association member delegates to share programs and activities and to advise IASL on its activities. The Association Assembly is the annual report of the Association Assembly.

The IASL/SIRS International Commendation Award is given for an innovative project submitted by a school library association member of IASL which could serve as a model for replication by others.

November 1996

Dr Dianne Oberg, Associate Professor at the University of Alberta, Canada, giving a paper at the IASL Conference.

November 1996

Policy Issues

Laurel A. Clyde

AIA Special Programs & Awards

IASL/UNESCO Cooperative Action Program helps provide books for school libraries in developing countries—Africa, Asia, the South Pacific, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean.

School Library Leadership Development Fund assists in bringing leaders in the field of education and libraries from developing countries to the Annual Conference of the International Association of School Librarianship.

Support-A-Member is a gift program designed to make it possible for school librarians, teacher-librarians, media specialists, library assistants and others interested in school library service who are living in developing countries to belong to the International Association of School Librarianship.

The Association Assembly provides a forum at the IASL Annual Conference for association member delegates to share programs and activities and to advise IASL on its activities. The Association Assembly is the annual report of the Association Assembly.

The IASL/SIRS International Commendation Award is given for an innovative project submitted by a school library association member of IASL which could serve as a model for replication by others.

November 1996

Dr Dianne Oberg, Associate Professor at the University of Alberta, Canada, giving a paper at the IASL Conference.
Daisy Lake, Supervisor of School Libraries in Antigua. Daisy’s vision — that we all have to work for the improvement of school libraries with whatever resources we have — was expressed in her acceptance speech: ‘If it is to be, it is up to me’.

The IASL Leadership Development Grant is provided each year to enable a person who is in a leadership role in developing a country to attend the IASL conference. From 1996, it has been officially named the IASL/Jean E. Lowrie Grant in recognition of Jean’s long-standing interest in the promotion of school library services in developing countries.

Over the past seven years, this fund has been supported by the annual IASL Auction, a fun night at each conference when Gerald Brown, IASL Vice-President (described in a previous Australian report as “that Canadian charmer”) auctions all kinds of (more or less actionable) contributions from members and sponsors. This year’s auction raised more than US$1200, which will go to the Support-A-Member Fund which subsidises fees for people in developing countries who normally would not be able to afford membership (particularly when that membership has to be paid for in foreign currency). This is the only way that people in leadership roles in some developing countries can be part of IASL and have access to IASL publications like the newsletter and the journal School Libraries Worldwide. To someone in Australia, this may not sound like much, but I found in my travels in Africa earlier in 1996 that in some developing countries even national libraries may not be able to afford any foreign journal subscriptions and some school library advisers in those countries see only their own school library newsletters and the journals and newsletters provided by IASL. The requirement that foreign subscriptions be paid in ‘hard’ currency put them well beyond the means of individuals in developing countries for whom an IASL subscription might represent a month’s salary. Under these circumstances, the fund can make a real difference.

Special Activities
Other activities that were part of the conference week included the Assembly of Associations (where representatives of the IASL member associations report on their activities and share information), visits to schools and libraries, readings from Caribbean children’s literature, a presentation of Jamaican videos for children and demonstrations of IASL-LINK and the IASL Web site.

Telecommunications of Jamaica (the equivalent of the Australia’s Telstra) set up four Internet terminals which were available for use by delegates throughout the conference. I used one to demonstrate the IASL Web site during a conference session, and all four were also used for short Internet tutorials for delegates. In the latter, I was assisted by Sigrún Johannesdóttir (Iceland), Dianne Oberg (Canada) and Hallgrimur Indriðason (Iceland). Owen Burthwright of Telecommunications of Jamaica was present throughout the conference and he also helped delegates to use the terminals. Maggie Roche of Sydney was one of the people who took advantage of this, not only using the conference terminals to send e-mail ‘postcards from Jamaica’ to IASL-LINK and OZTL_NET, but also showing other delegates how to use the Internet.

1997... IASL in Vancouver!
The 1997 IASL conference will be held in beautiful Vancouver, British Columbia, from 6–11 July in cooperation with the Association for Teacher-Librarianship in Canada (ATLC). The theme of ‘Bridging the Gap: Information Rich but Knowledge Poor’ will provide the foundation for the exploration of opportunities and challenges that face schools and school libraries today.

Lynne Lighthall’s Vancouver organizing committee has begun work on a program that promises to be professionally exciting, incorporating a range of visits, research papers and professional development sessions. The venue will be the University of British Columbia (UBC) with accommodation on campus and in hotels.

As Qantas flies into Vancouver from Sydney, attendance at this conference will be easier and cheaper for Australians. In addition, Vancouver is a wonderful gateway to other scenic areas including the Canadian Rockies, the Whistler mountain resort area, the Gulf Islands and the Inside Passage to Alaska.

References