

Program in 1995

My, how you have grown! I happen to have, in front of me right now, your 'Programme' from 1995 (when even the spelling was different).

It is comprised of just four sheets of A5 paper: eight pages of printed material. Compare that with the nineteen A4 pages of our latest Program.

It may not be as monumental as some biblical scroll but it similarly tells a story about the people and the simplicity of its time, enabling us to note the extent to which things have changed since then. If we look beyond mere age alone we are able to see the full messages, not only those openly expressed but also those hidden; the ones written between the lines as it were.

The openly expressed messages were, of course, to proclaim the Association was open for business and to set out its wares. These comprised all the courses available for the Semester running from 27 February to 18 May. All eighteen of them. Yes, as many as eighteen. (Now there is a choice of 90 to enrol in).

At number 15 in the list, and running on Fridays from 24 March to 12 May, is found 'Magic of the Movies'. Its Tutor? Yours truly, Lionel Farrell. (We were not called Course Leaders in those days. All Tutors.). Toronto Library was the venue.

As an aside, it occurs to me that, to be recognised as a 1995 Tutor, I must have been a member of the Association before the program was evolved. I have no recollection of how or when that came about but it may possibly have something to do with the provision, stated in the Programme, that

'If you joined in 1994 you remain financial until the end of 1995',

The summary for my movie course starts off with 'An informative trip down memory lane on the centenary of the movies' and goes on to mention the topics to be covered: 'musicals, comedies, westerns, thrillers and others – and the stars of the silver screen'. What a promotion! How could anyone resist it? No wonder it attracted as many as 10 enrolments, although three of them never turned up, a problem then as now. But it was an enjoyable course to deliver and, I would like to think, also to receive. It was also at that time I enrolled in two other courses: 'Public Speaking' - held in the delightful venue of the Toronto Railway Station. Two people, still with the LMU3A, who stand out for me from at or from those days are the indispensable Anne Mills, our long serving Public Officer and highly efficient Returning Officer, and also Pearl Fahey. I have the memory of attending meetings at Pearl's house, not for any course but for discussion on what I cannot for the life of me recall. Pearl is still an active member and it is a pleasure to see her regularly every Monday at the Trivia course.

These are some of the recollections prompted by the openly expressed messages of Programme 1995. What of the hidden ones I referred to earlier, the ones written between the lines, the ones hinted at or suggested to an enquiring mind? The ones that give some indication, however small, of the challenges facing the dedicated

people who brought the Association into being in those early days in the effort to get the ball rolling?

First and foremost is the stark simplicity of the Programme 1995 itself: just four sheets of A5 paper: a mere eight pages of printed material, all but the front page with the hallmark of being typewritten. Nothing electronic here. And that front page design and layout seems to me done by hand, probably with the aid of a stencil. The whole conjures up a picture of some poor soul, hunched over an old typewriter. She – in my picture it has to be a ‘she’ - is laboriously typing out course details, hastening to meet some deadline and struggling to get the material ready to be sent to the printer prior to laborious postal addressing and distribution. I was struck by how basic it was or seemed to be. A world remote from that of today. How modern technology has created that difference is encapsulated for me in two sentences on page

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‘Membership receipts will be given to you at your first session’ and ‘Assume you are enrolled in the course of your choice unless otherwise advised’.

I found these simple sentences incredibly powerful, signifying a clear intention of the desire to avoid or at least spread out further the time for the labour involved in more handwriting whether of receipts or advisings, a desire given credence by the carefully handwritten class attendance lists such as that I received for my movie course. Just imagine: 18 courses, 18 different lists of class members. All handwritten. Reflect for a moment on today with our 90 courses and give thanks to the technology that makes the working of our Association possible but which our predecessors lacked.

Yet what we with hindsight view as the deficiencies of their times enables us to appreciate and value all the more the work of those founders. The milestone we celebrate this year is a tribute to their endeavours. To resort to cliché but the truth nevertheless, they took that first step on our 25-year-old journey with the result that we today are able to enjoy to the full all that membership of our Association brings.

On this anniversary we can, again, congratulate ourselves on each of us helping in our own way to make our LMU3A as successful as it is, in a similar way as do cup-winning sports teams. We are justified in doing so. But in so doing let us give thought to those who, 25 years ago, could see little ahead but a potential future for which they were prepared to strive. And give our thanks to them for their legacy.

Lionel Farrell