

Maguire's ire

It's a joke, it's a time warp it's amazing. I refer to the astonishing anachronism in the qualifications specified by the University of Sydney in its advertisement for a Library Assistant in your 5 February issue.

I quote: 'Completion of one year full-time of a degree or equivalent of three papers of the Registration Examination of the Library Association of Australia'

Since the LAA laid the Registration Examination to rest in 1980 surely a livelier prescription could be written. At least the addendum to the salary range advertised, namely 'under 21 years according to age', will, for those who have LAA qualifications, apply only to former child prodigies who completed three Registration papers by the time they were 13!

Carmel Maguire

Associate Professor

School of Librarianship University of NSW

New State Library building

The Minister for the Arts, Mr Ian Cathie is, of course, correct in saying that the Museums Act of 1983 does not specifically provide for a new State Library building (*The Age*, 25 February 1988). However, the Act does state in Schedule 2 that the whole area at present shared by the library with the museum 'shall be deemed to have been permanently reserved for the purposes of a public museum'. The inference is that the library will move to another site.

Mr Cathie as Opposition spokesman was quoted as announcing an ALP plan 'to shift the Queen Victoria Medical Centre to Clayton and build a new State Library on the Lonsdale Street site . . . The shift of the State Library would free the historic part of the library building, including the noted reading room, for use as a new natural history museum' (*The Age*, 6 October 1981).

Mr Race Mathews as Minister for the Arts announced that 'The new library will be on the site of the Queen Victoria Medical Centre, which is being moved to Clayton. The existing library space will then be handed over to the museum' (*The Herald*, 15 February 1983).

The force of the above statements has conveyed an impression of accomplished legislation resulting in the actual use of the term 'legislation' in press reports. Moreover, since 1970, public meetings, a citizens' petition of 3,000 signatures, an architectural competition and a succession of studies of the library's formidable problems, including the latest Hancock study of 1987, have upheld the plan for a new library building.

Of at least 50 news items, articles and letters in the daily press since 1981, an overwhelming representation of public opinion has emphatically supported a new library building as the only practical solution. Only seven individuals, none of whom lay claim to any expertise or experience in library management, have in public presumed to judge the State Library as properly housed in its present accommodation.

Axel Lodewycks

Public library funding in Victoria

It is a sad reflection on the objectivity and professionalism of some members of the library profession that Ray Price's report on the Geddes reports (*InCite*, 4 March) sacrificed accuracy for value judgements and unsubstantiated assertions.

Ray notes that 'the reports . . . were obviously put together in haste as they are poorly presented and printed.' There seems to be some confusion here between printing schedules and the consultancy process itself. Ray fails to note that while the consultant was appointed in December 1986, the reports were presented in April and June 1987 — a tight schedule, but not exactly a 'rush job'.

The report in *InCite* also asserts that 'There can be no doubt that the major aim of the Minister was to justify a reduction in state expenditure on public libraries.' This cynical assertion seems to have become part of popular folklore among certain public librarians in Victoria. The reports were certainly prepared against a background of cuts to public library funding. It is moving from fact to unsubstantiated assertion to state that their preparation was simply an exercise in political justification, rather than a real attempt to examine and report on the problems and opportunities facing the Victorian library community.

The library profession sees fit to condemn governments for lack of action on library matters, but appears to bitterly resent any interest or action unless there are dollar signs attached. This is not to suggest that the Geddes reports did not contain controversial proposals which needed to be debated. In fact it is a matter for regret that the Victorian Branch of the LAA has not been able to see its way clear to officially co-operate in the process established by the Ministry for the Arts for that purpose.

While Ray Price mentions the process of consultation under Pat Stewart's direction, he neglects to mention the establishment of The Library Funding Review Working Party to formulate new funding arrangements for Victorian public libraries in the light of the recommendations in the Geddes reports. The Working Party represents the Municipal Association of Victoria, the Metropolitan Municipal Association, the Ministry for the Arts, and includes the President of the Sur-

vival of Libraries in Victoria (SOLV) as a co-opted member.

The Library Funding Review Working Party is due to present its report to the Minister for the Arts within the next two weeks. This follows a forum on 16 February to discuss the Working Party's draft report. I trust the report from the Victorian Branch on this meeting will be somewhat more factual.

As consultant to the Working Party, let me say that there has been a concerted effort by all parties involved to come to a workable agreement on new funding arrangements, and to take into account the concerns of the library profession. It is no secret that the Working Party's report recommends a funding formula very different from that proposed by Geddes.

While Ray's report on the post Geddes processes is a little behind the times, his comments on new legislation for a restructured Library Council of Victoria somewhat jump the gun. His comments relate to discussion on a discussion paper, and do not necessarily represent the final content of the legislation.

Finally, an exhortation to the profession: whatever the intensity of our views, please do not let objectivity and rationality desert us entirely.

Diana Killen

Victorian Ministry for the Arts

Single unit enrolments

I noticed your report in *InCite* (4 December 1987) concerning single unit enrolments, and would wish to inform members that at Curtin there is no problem for those enrolling as extension students to take units to upgrade their skills and/or professional knowledge. They are charged a fee of approximately \$80 for the unit and receive a letter saying that they have taken the unit. However, they cannot use this as credit towards an award.

Unfortunately *InCite* arrived just after we had advertised this facility in the West Australian. The response has been less than I had hoped, due possibly to a concern that the fees might be more like \$300.

Dr Patricia Layzell Ward

Head, Department of Library and Information Studies

Curtin University of Technology



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Victorian public library funding

On Tuesday 16 February over 100 members of the library community and officers and Local Government Councillors from around Victoria met at the University of Melbourne to discuss the draft recommendations of the Library Funding Review Working Party. The recommendations are the result of five months intensive work by the Working Party, which engaged as consultant Ms Diana Killen. The report makes recommendations that the funding formula for public libraries continues to be based substantially on a per capita component, and that this be combined with the Ross indicator of socio-economic disadvantage. In addition a series of accountability measures be which embrace standard output measures to ensure that comparative data for all Victorian Public Libraries are collected. The assembled participants agreed in principal with the directions that the recommendations were taking, but considered that more work would need to be done to sort out the several inconsistencies that were reflected in the recommendations. Genuine concern was expressed about one of the proposals to penalise those libraries which were unable to provide services that met specific standards, yet to be determined. In general however, the

report was well received, and its recommendations to co-ordinate public library services more effectively were seen as a positive outcome of the many recent enquiries into library services in Victoria.

Max Borchardt

Go west young librarian

Neil Radford's acrimonious response to news of the increase in student intake at Riverina-Murray Institute of Higher Education (*InCite*, 5 February 1988) may reflect the favourable staffing situation at his institution, but this same situation does not occur outside the metropolitan area. Librarians in the capital cities may have a deluge of applicants from which to select, but when similar positions are advertised in the country, we consider ourselves fortunate indeed if we can choose from even four applicants. Usually there are even fewer. Ironically, when librarians can be induced to leave the city, they are usually delighted and gratified by the quality of lifestyle they enjoy.

May I suggest that metropolitan institutions that have a large number of graduates from which to choose are offered this greater choice because of the work of library schools? Were we to accept only a minimum number of

students, we would merely replace vacancies as they occur. Surely it is preferable for an employer to have some choice of applicants?

An increasing number of students are studying not to become librarians but for other reasons. These reasons include:

- the simple desire to engage in some mentally stimulating (or satisfying) exercise;
- a need to upgrade qualifications to make them eligible for promotion. (Who are we to dictate that library technicians, for example, shall remain at technician level for the rest of their lives?); or
- an interest to move into a different area, but one where librarianship skills are needed.

Ever since I have been involved in the education of librarians, I have been hearing about the over-supply of librarians, with library schools being exhorted to exercise restraint in accepting applicants. If there is such an over-supply, why haven't aspiring librarians heard of it? Why do we continue to receive four and five times the number of applicants we can accept in our courses?

D. Joan Joyce
Senior Lecturer (EDP)
Riverina-Murray Institute
of Higher Education

Image


Axel Lodewycks' recent letter (*InCite*, 5 February 1988) and article focus our attention on the twin problems of our profession — image and communication.

Political and financial realities dictate the necessity for urgent action, and 1988, which marks the beginning of the second half century of the LAA's history, seems an appropriate year in which to initiate positive responses to the challenge of the anachronistic public perception of librarians and their roles.


We can change the image of our profession and we can communicate to the community, and especially to those responsible for funding libraries, the importance of librarians as intermediaries between information and those who seek it to satisfy business, educational or recreational needs.

LAA approved seminars 'Marketing the Librarian: the Profession and the Individual' will be held in Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne. Join in and decide what is our optimum image and how we can communicate this to our publics. In the meantime think positively about our profession, and think out loud. We can't start over unless we BEGIN!

Jennifer Evans
Freelance Library
and Information Services Pty Ltd

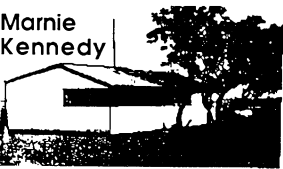


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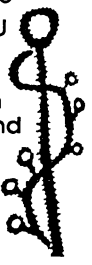
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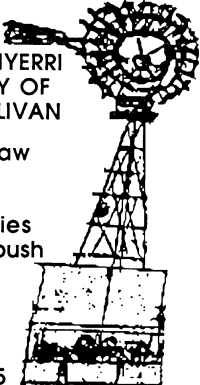
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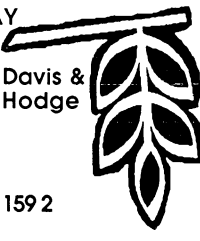
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