

AV Media Librarians — an endangered species?

'Come into my office' said the Library Manager to the AV Media (AVM) Librarian.

'Times are tough, we have to rationalise services and cut costs' they explained. 'The materials you organise and the services you provide are just too expensive. We've decided to disband your department. Of course you'll be given a nice job as a subject librarian at one of our recently amalgamated campuses. Maybe astrophysics or Coptic art would suit you.'

The AVM Librarian stared at the Library Manager in horror. 'But what have I done? I'm managing a collection and providing services that our clients need and have always wanted. What about the years of AVM experience I've developed? I don't know anything about astrophysics or Coptic art!'

The current state of AVM departments in New South Wales libraries may not be quite as bad as the above scenario suggests but their roles and function are coming under close scrutiny. The State Film Library has discontinued its booking service; the University of New South Wales has reorganised its Audio Visual service; the University of Technology, Sydney has its lecture tape and film/video services under review; the University of Western Sydney, Nepean has formed a working party to look at the operation of

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its Media and Audio Visual Services. There is an overall impression that the integrationists are gaining strength with a trend towards subject rather than format collections.

Perhaps we have an image problem. Ahsted, in his 1985 survey of media facilities in academic libraries, wrote that 'librarians as a group are viewed as introspective while media people are perceived as temperamental and a little out of control.' I have been known to lose my temper but frustration affects all committed professionals occasionally. Far from being out of control, AVM Librarians possess specialist skills and seek to develop those skills by actively participating in professional AVM groups.

AVM Librarians use expert knowledge to provide better subject access to their collections. Library catalogues are created from MARC records which average 2.5 subject headings per item. These subject headings are assigned using a scheme which is designed to describe books rather than media. AVM Librarians can link clients with information considerably faster than the slow whirl of a CD-Cat or the

plodding response time of an OPAC.

Is there a media bias in libraries? Ellison and Robinson claim that 'the neglect of non-print in both libraries and schools reflects the reluctance of the profession to adapt to the technological, informational, and social changes of the past few decades.' Skills have already been developed by AVM Librarians which can be used to build relevant AVM Collections, provide quality associated services and counteract this prevailing bias towards book materials.

Some Academic Librarians believe that AVM resources are teaching aids rather than serious research materials like books and serials. Maybe they should read the ALIA publications *Finding and keeping: research use of audiovisual materials* (1987) and *Finding and keeping: researcher's guide to audiovisual resources in Australia* (1989). Collections of slides, maps, films and computer software are used by researchers all over Australia. UWS, Nepean is developing a Visual Arts Slide Collection and an automated slide management system. The Collection will be an invaluable resource for any researcher involved in art history and criticism.

An informal survey I conducted recently suggests that my clients are generally happy with the way the AVM Collection is organised and with the services we provide. They want easy access to AVM by keeping it separate from the book collection. The ideal AVM department would be staffed by people who know how to use the resources and be located close to equipment support facilities. They did not favour an integrated book/AVM collection citing reasons like shelving chaos, difficulties finding specific formats, security of expensive items and preservation of fragile materials as their major concerns. Clients would like to see larger collections of AVM in libraries. Computer software, multimedia and interactive technologies are recent innovations which libraries seem reluctant to include in their collections but they were listed as potential library resources by my clients.

My aim in writing these notes has been to report on changes occurring in the AVM area and to stimulate discussion of the issues involved. Any attempt to improve the provision of information services in libraries must be seen as worthwhile. However we must consider the needs of our clients and the peculiar nature of AVM before changing policies. I believe that we should maintain the current level of AVM services, build our AVM collections and evaluate and introduce new technologies to those collections. AVM Librarians are uniquely placed to carry this work out.

Election of Vice-President 1992 (President-elect 1993)

AUSTRALIAN
LIBRARY AND
INFORMATION
ASSOCIATION

Call for nominations

In 1986, the General Council of the then Library Association of Australia resolved to change the composition of the Executive Committee from President, Immediate Past-President, Vice-President, General Secretary, General Treasurer and Chairman of the Board of Education to President, Immediate Past-President, Vice-President and two members of the Council elected by the General Council to the Executive Committee.

The positions of General Treasurer and General Secretary are thus being abolished. This will be completed when revised By-laws are approved by the Governor-General. In the interim, these positions are being filled by the two members of Council elected to the Executive Committee.

In accordance with Division F Regulations,

nominations are now called for the position of Vice-President 1992 (President-elect 1993). Nominees must be personal financial members of the Association. Candidates and nominators should read the relevant regulations carefully. Please note that nominations must be:

- in writing;
- signed by two financial members of ALIA;
- accompanied by the written consent of the nominee, who shall supply a current curriculum vitae and a statement of professional concerns (each of no more than 100 words).

Nominations must reach the Executive Director, PO Box E441, Queen Victoria Terrace, ACT 2600 by 5 pm on 1 September 1991.